the weekly Standard

JUNE 2, 2003

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LEON KASS'S GENESIS
GARY A. ANDERSON

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

THE COMMANDER

How Tommy Franks won the Iraq war

BY FRED BARNES

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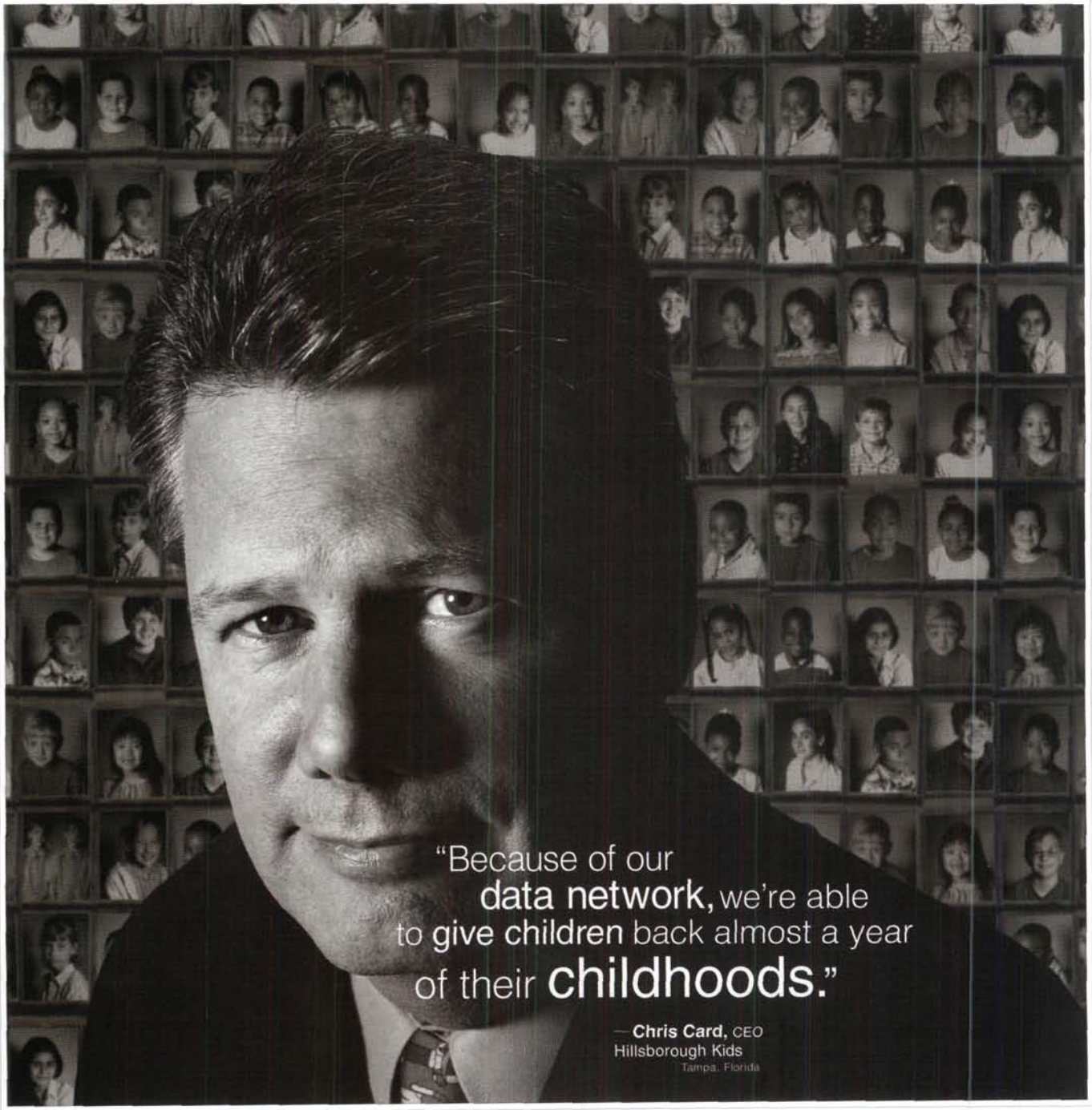

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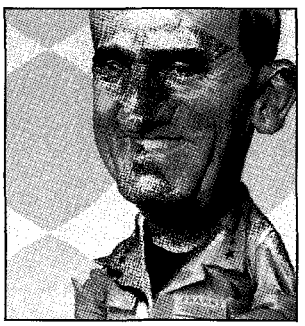

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Annals of Sid

Sidney Blumenthal, the Erich von Stroheim of the Clinton administration, has published a memoir of his White House days—to generally poor reviews, most of them from newspapers and magazines ordinarily sympathetic to the author's politics. Of course, no such book should be assumed useless simply because its notices are stinko. Very often, in fact, it's the "worst" first-person accounts of recent political history that provide the best sort of fun: unintentionally embarrassing anecdotes that the clueless writer imagines are worth boasting about. Alas, however, even on these ironic terms, *The Clinton Wars* turns out to be an unusually nutritionless meal. And such large portions! Eight hundred-plus pages of mercilessly patronizing, tutelary prose the likes of which most grownups won't have seen since those lives-of-the-great-inventors library books they made us read in elementary school.

In sum, we can't recommend the thing.

Nevertheless, as a service to those of our readers who remain helplessly curious about Blumenthal's brand of political pathology, THE SCRAPBOOK offers the following, handy-dandy condensation of *The Clinton Wars*. All quotations guaranteed accurate. No, really.

CHAPTER ONE: Sidney introduces his hero during a visit to FDR's boyhood home in March 1993. "President Clinton brought in with him a stream of cool, brisk air from outside. At six feet, two inches, with a jutting jaw, gray-green eyes, a ruddy complexion, and loose long limbs, Clinton was the most physically imposing person in the room, as he almost always was." Having survived a "vicious" Republican election campaign the previous autumn, Clinton is now confronting a conservative reaction against the "protean nature" of his personality, symbolized by the president's "eclectic relationship with music," which "the traditionally minded warned was the devil's sign." Clinton is determined to persist. "One evening, without advance notice, Clinton conducted the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. A member of the orchestra told me he was the only guest conductor they'd ever had who knew what he was doing."

CHAPTER TWO: Given America's "peculiar vulnerability" to "moralistic absolutism, anti-intellectualism, [and] populist demagogy," many people fail to see Clinton as he is: "the poor boy who rises by dint of hard work, merit, superior intelligence, and character." And ignorant suspicion of Clinton, always amplified by processing through "the right-wing gears," breeds a series of empty domestic scandals: "There was never anything to Whitewater," a fantasy concocted by men who "shared an antagonism toward blacks and toward Bill Clinton." Meanwhile, things go wrong overseas, too. Republicans are to blame. "Powell dominated Clinton's foreign policy councils." Ominously, we hear of a man named Kenneth Starr, "the son of a Church of Christ minister, inculcated in biblical literalism and the sinfulness of drink, dancing, and fornicating."

CHAPTER THREE: To conservatives, "[i]f government was the Behemoth from the Book of Revelation, Clinton must be Lucifer." Therefore, the Clinton health care plan fails, and all looks grim until . . . the Oklahoma City bombing, "a turning point against the Republican right."

CHAPTER FOUR: Enter Dick Morris, an "opportunist," sure, but someone who "helped Clinton to be pragmatic for good ends," meaning a reelection victory in 1996. Sidney helps too. First he persuades the president to use the magic words "One America" in his 1996 State of the Union address. Then "I hit upon a phrase: the indispensable nation," that revolutionized American foreign policy. "These phrases were not mere slogans. The words mattered." Republican attacks on Democratic fundraising improprieties sputter when "[a]ll the charges were revealed to be empty," and Clinton wins a second term.

CHAPTER FIVE: "The facts would have upset the way they were telling the story, so there were no facts," but media attention to Whitewater persists, and soon Mrs. Clinton is "under siege." The siege is unfair. "In brief, every one of the accusations against the Clintons was false." Sidney provides Hillary a respite from Washington by arranging for her to attend a Manhattan luncheon with friendly writers and deliver a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations. The reception is "overwhelmingly positive." And it is "a step on the road that led her eventually to decide to run for the Senate." But meanwhile, back in the capital, media hostility, especially at the *Washington Post*, continues unabated; "a bias toward the Republican version was presented as objective." Paula Jones files her lawsuit. Clinton, frustrated but still eager to bring goodness to the world, asks Sidney to join his staff. Sidney agrees.

CHAPTER SIX: Sidney recalls his childhood and education; his career in journalism; his active participation in various Democratic political campaigns he was simultaneously writing about; and his friendships with an immensely long list of famous people. His journalism arouses ire "from only one element: the neoconservatives," whose politics have a "Stalinist" method. But these enemies manage to derail Sidney's work at the *New Yorker*. He is replaced by the late Michael Kelly, which makes Clinton's job offer all the more attractive.

CHAPTER SEVEN: "My title was Assistant to the President. Within the formal rankings of the White House, this is the highest level."

CHAPTER EIGHT: "Learning by observing others on the staff, I quickly saw that part of my function was that of a catalyst." The catalyst has many conversations with the president and first lady and writes them many memos, all quoted at interminable length.

CHAPTER NINE: Sidney introduces British prime minister Tony Blair to Clinton, and the two Americans help their Labour party friend restore England to greatness. At home, Sidney and the president continue their struggle against conservatism, a force whose "au-

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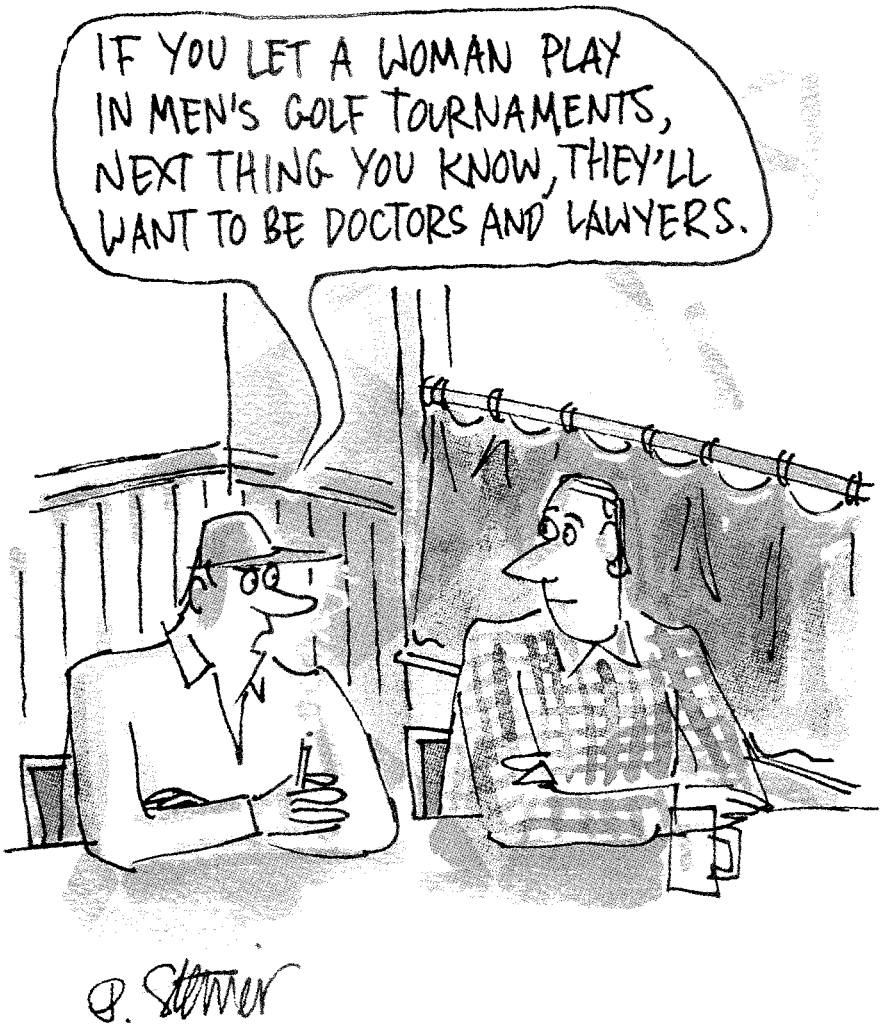

thentic" roots lie in "the Confederacy" and a commitment to "concentrated private power." The Confederates fight back: The Monica Lewinsky story breaks in the press.

Chapters Ten through Twelve: Sidney already knows "about the right-wing conservative movement," but to learn how that movement is fabricating a sex scandal against the president, he cultivates David Brock. With Brock's help, Sidney discovers that Starr, in league with the media and "the knuckle-dragging crowd," intends to use Lewinsky to destroy the Clinton administration and all its good deeds. The Lewinsky investigation is "an Italianate conspiracy—an intricate, covert, amoral operation bent on power." Sidney is subpoenaed by the grand jury. "Serious journalists" are "shocked and dismayed." Others are not. Mike Kelly calls Blumenthal "Sid the Human Ferret," though Kelly fails to cite "a single documented incident" to verify the contention. Sidney decides to sacrifice himself to preserve Clinton's presidency, even in the face of anti-Semitic attacks from *Vanity Fair*: "Self-denial was the price of public service that had to be paid." Blumenthal's academic friends organize in the president's defense, and the tide begins to turn: "Not since Vietnam had the intellectuals intervened in politics with such effect."

Chapter Thirteen: Oddly undeterred by the intellectuals, House Republicans prepare to impeach the president. "Minor academic scholars or conservative political figures" are pressed into service by the GOP and make "tendentious" arguments. Many of those arguments focus on Sidney himself, because he is "Eastern educated, a 1960s graduate, from the liberal media, Jewish, [and] intellectual." During the Senate impeachment trial, Blumenthal is betrayed by his friend Christopher Hitchens, an "unkempt," "bleary-eyed," "unreliable," and chronically "lubricated" person. But justice triumphs in the end.

Chapters Fourteen & Fifteen: "After the Kosovo war, other world leaders regarded Clinton with a deference that extended beyond his role as the chief of state of the number-one power. . . . Because of their implicit trust in him, U.S. prestige reached a zenith it had not enjoyed since perhaps the presidency of John F. Kennedy." Sidney is centrally involved in diplomacy with European political leaders, but he eventually shifts attention to Mrs. Clinton's planned Senate campaign. "Most of her staff were against it," but "I said it was a risk she should take."

Chapter Sixteen: "The negative Republican campaign against Al Gore, once begun, never ended." George W. Bush, a man who has spent "much of" his life on "drunken sprees," now has a "messianic streak about his destiny gained from his born-again religious conversion"—and Bush is consequently a "ruthless" campaigner. In the end, however, "Gore had won the votes of a majority of the American people." But Florida, which once had "the largest Klan in the South," hangs in the balance. The Bush campaign encourages a riot to disrupt vote counting in Miami. A "flagrantly political and authoritarian" decision by the Supreme Court halts that voting, effectively denying black Floridians "the full rights of citizenship." Bush is "installed" in the White House.

Chapters Seventeen & Eighteen: A "concatenation of pseudoscandals" plagues the administration as its time winds down, but the president leaves office a giant (with Sid on his shoulder). Future chief executives "will stand in the shadow of Clinton." ♦

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Casual

Left Luggage

A dark cloud sat low over Smith College on graduation Sunday. The venerable women's school had inexplicably decided to celebrate its 125th commencement by inviting a controversial ideologue to speak. Naturally, the campus and community shot into action.

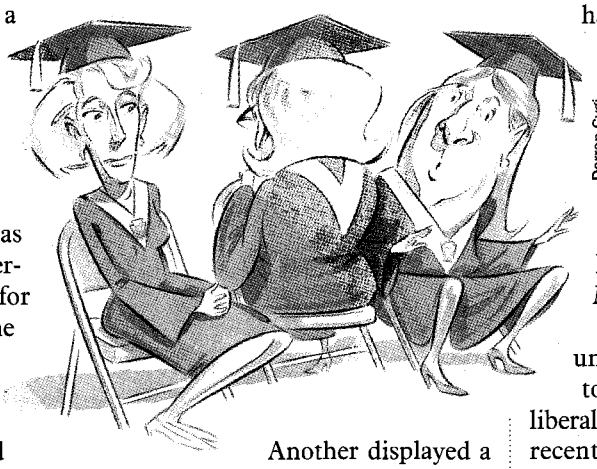
As guests filed into the quad for the ceremony, they were handed, along with the fancy official program, a Xeroxed leaflet put together by a group of anonymous Smithies that asked people to "Please take a few moments to read the concerns of several students and the biography provided inside to consider the suggested actions."

The speaker's biography was troubling, all right. The controversial figure was "responsible for human rights atrocities around the world" and had supported "major U.S. interventions that led to millions of innocent deaths" and now stands "accused of crimes against humanity."

It came as no surprise, then, that the speaker is affiliated with "an institution designed to legitimate foreign elections manufactured and manipulated by the U.S. State Department for corporate and private interests." Predictably, this fiend is also "a member of the Trilateral Commission."

The handbill asked audience members to show their dissatisfaction by wearing red armbands, withholding applause, and keeping their heads bowed during the commencement address. "Our aim," it explained, "is to raise awareness about the policies [the speaker] endorsed while in public office and to encourage people to reflect on what qualities are important in an appropriate commencement speaker. We do not seek to transform this event into a disruptive political protest."

During the procession, scores of graduates wore red armbands or red ribbons (so did some audience members and even one of the undergraduate ushers working the stage)—by my unscientific count, between 15 and 25 percent of the 600 or so seniors. Some went further. A particularly dour girl had not only a red armband, but a long, tortured quotation from Virginia Woolf pinned to the back of her hood.



Darren Gygi

Another displayed a "No War" button.

Others held signs aloft as they filed to their seats. The most coherent one read, "I honor learning but do not respect your relentless pursuit of global empire."

When the speaker took the podium, a handful of graduates walked out. Others turned their folding chairs around and sat with their backs to the stage for the entire address. So did a number of parents and guests.

And that's when things got lively. As soon as the speaker began, a chorus of shouts and boos came from the back of the assemblage. The heckling continued until almost the seven-minute mark in the speech, when the speaker finally addressed the protesters and promised to meet with them afterwards if they would quiet down.

Mercifully, they did. The speech went on for a few more minutes—nothing terribly controversial, the standard fare about reaching for your dreams and giving back to your community. Then, as the speaker mentioned the remarkable example of the passengers of Flight 93, a man rushed the stage carrying a sign proclaiming, "Another reason why they hate us."

Police officers quickly surrounded him and escorted him out. A few moments later, another protester made a break for the stage wearing a gigantic papier-mâché mask that someone told me looked like a caricature of the speaker featuring a giant hooknose. Five cops rushed to intercept the papier-mâché kid and wrangle him or her out of the quad.

By then the screams and catcalls had returned. One more protester was surrounded by police, after which it was relatively smooth sailing for the final few paragraphs of the speech.

In case you're wondering, the beleaguered speaker was Bill Clinton's secretary of state, Madeleine Albright.

In the end, it was perhaps unreasonable to expect Smithies to endure a merely mainstream liberal. They just aren't used to it. In recent years the college has chosen graduation speakers almost exclusively from the ranks of the far left—Lani Guinier, Toni Morrison, Judy Chicago, Marian Wright Edelman, Anna Quindlen. Gloria Steinem has received the honor twice. (Oh, to have been in Northampton when Elizabeth Dole came to campus in 1998!)

It should be said that most of those present were respectful of Albright. They applauded politely and paid as much attention as can be expected during a long ceremony involving hundreds of children who don't belong to you. And maybe it's a sign of my own provincialism that I didn't even realize that there *was* a serious—that is, impassioned—critique of Albright from the left.

Live and learn.

Jonathan V. Last

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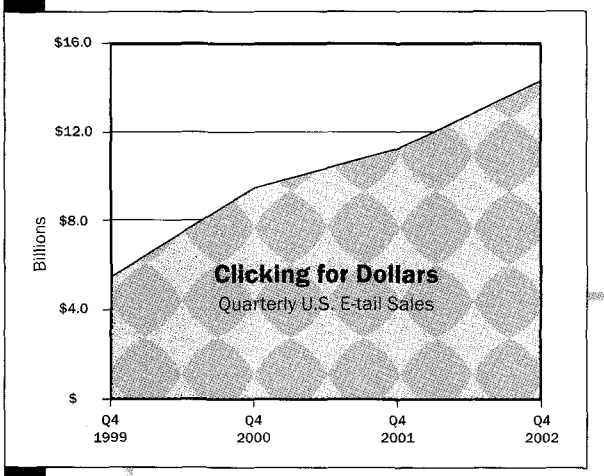

GAINING MOMENTUM IN THE DIGITAL DECADE

In 1997, devotees of home electronics eagerly awaited the DVD player, a new device that could play movies without videotape, and with greater clarity.

It caught on even faster than CD music players—faster than any other consumer electronics product, ever. Within four years, DVD movies surpassed VHS tapes in sales.

The DVD's success is just one example of a historic shift from analog to digital technologies. It began with computing and is now spreading to many areas of our lives, including industries from banking to publishing. Products and services are shedding the limits of their physical form to become encoded information that never degrades, can be reproduced perfectly and distributed around the world in minutes, or less.

Another example is photography: by the end of this year, the number of images captured digitally each day is expected to surpass the number of images captured on film.

With digital cameras and other devices linked to personal computers, Americans are collecting vast amounts of data, which fortunately takes up little or no closet space. Today's average personal computer has a hard drive that can store 300 times more information than a decade ago, and storage capacity will multiply again 30-fold in the next few years.

Digital technologies, such as broadband e-commerce, are expected to provide the primary means of delivering entertainment and media by the end of this decade. Meanwhile, despite the dot-com bust, online commerce in many products and services continues to increase rapidly. Last year in the United States, online retail sales grew 27 percent, compared with a 3-percent rise in retail sales overall.

Even life itself is increasingly digitized. The human genome, the recipe for our genetic makeup, has been mapped and encoded. Researchers in bioinformatics are harnessing the power of computing to model biological processes and accelerate the development of new, lifesaving drugs.

The implications of this broad, digital revolution are enormous, although they tend to be overshadowed by the struggles of high-tech industries to recover from the go-go years of the 1990s. Those struggles are real, yet there are reasons for optimism about a return to robust economic growth and job creation in the next several years.

Despite setbacks and slowdowns, technology continues to create opportunities

The digital innovations of the past two decades continue to bear fruit, in new business opportunities, improved processes and more productive workers. Productivity is the key to raising living standards without inflation. Last year, U.S. productivity increased at the fastest rate in 50 years.

The network infrastructure for further gains in productivity is gradually being built. The number of U.S. households with high-speed broadband access to the Internet is expected to jump 41 percent this year.

And innovation, a principal driver of productivity, continues to flourish. Microsoft, for one, is investing more than $4.6 billion this year alone on research and development of new technologies and products.

So, stay tuned for good news—digitally, of course.

One in a series of essays on technology and society. More information is available at microsoft.com/issues.

Microsoft

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Stalin's Shadow

Why are high school students in North America not taught about the crimes of the ex-Soviet Union? This question springs to mind when reading Melana Zyla Vickers's "Why We Must Remember the Gulag" (May 19). It is almost taboo to be a Communist, but the fact of the matter is that almost no one knows what the Communists did. The murder of literally tens of millions is simply not mentioned in high schools.

Rather than simply repeating a mantra of "democracy is great," students should be taught about the outcomes of totalitarian states. Why aren't books like *Gulag Archipelago*, *Ivan Denisovich*, Robert Conquest's *Harvest of Sorrow*, or even Martin Amis's recent *Koba the Dread* compulsory high school reading? Vickers makes a very good point in saying that there is not enough recrimination of those culpable of the crimes committed in the ex-Soviet Union. Far worse, however, is that people are not even taught that such horrific crimes occurred. And what better way to teach young people how fortunate they are to live in countries with freedom and democracy than to acquaint them with the alternative?

R. Berloni
Montreal, Canada

Appointment Apathy

The problem with Bush's judicial nominations lies not so much in Democratic opposition as described in James L. Swanson's "The Democrats' Preemptive War" (May 19), but in public apathy.

I wager that not one in 1,000 Republicans even knows the name of the latest embattled nominee. In addition, the decorum and politeness of Republicans, in contrast with the angry and emotional response of Democrats, means this nomination will probably sink without most of the population even knowing the issue existed.

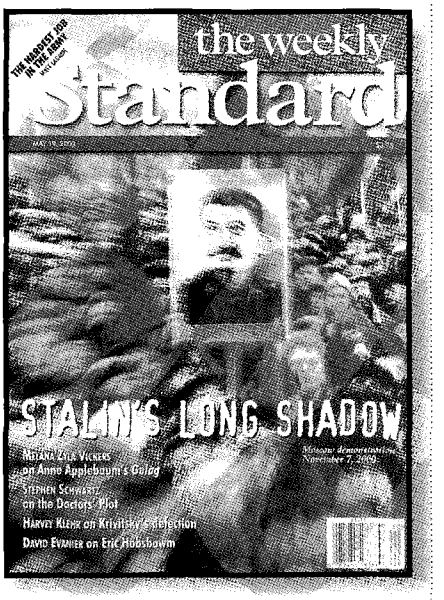
Nor will most of the population have pondered the consequences of the emergence of what amounts to a new requirement that all judicial appointees must express a liberal point of view if they wish to be confirmed.

Caroline Miranda
North Hollywood, CA

Kosovo Kids

The Weekly Standard's readers need to know that Lawrence B. Lindsey's column on the U.N. and international adoptions ("The U.N. vs. Adoption," April 28) was both glaringly wrong and misguided.

I regret that Lindsey had a difficult time getting clear information from UNICEF during his effort to adopt two children from Kosovo in 1998. But let's



get the facts straight: UNICEF does not run orphanages and does not set any nation's rules as to how to handle international adoptions.

We do, however, embrace some sensible principles on the subject. First, we believe that as long as the fate of any child's parents or relatives is not determined, at least two years should be invested in attempting to reunite children with adult relatives. We do this because it is every child's right to remain with family members—who, in the chaos that follows war, are often desperately searching for them. The Red Cross and the Save the Children Alliance operate on the same principle.

The State Department also supports this stance. Its website states that "adopting children from this region [former Yugoslavia] is not a feasible way to assist them. . . . It can be extremely difficult to determine if children whose parents are missing are truly orphans. It is not uncommon in a hostile situation for parents to send their children out of the area, or to become separated during an evacuation. Even when children have been truly orphaned or abandoned by their parents, they are often taken in by other relatives. Staying with relatives in extended family units is generally a better solution than uprooting the child completely."

The Joint Council on International Children's Services, an umbrella group for dozens of U.S. adoption agencies, makes similar points in relation to adoption from Afghanistan.

We also promote the straightforward principle that even when a child is conclusively determined to be an orphan, local options should be exhausted before international adoption comes into play. We do not believe that orphanages are good for children, but we do believe caring, home-grown solutions can and should be sought. Many societies revolve around extended families, and in the first instance UNICEF supports local communities that embrace orphaned children. Like our own children, such youngsters have the right to grow to adulthood within the culture and community of their birth.

That brings us to "Benjamin and Elizabeth." We do not sit in judgment of Lindsey's intentions, which surely were grounded in genuine love and compassion. But it is interesting that he still refers to them with made-up names, not as the human beings they are, but as props in his own story of frustration.

And his story says little of the impossible situation in Kosovo at the time. There was a complete collapse of administrative structure, uncertainty about the law, struggling social services, and the absence of any national body to monitor the appropriateness of irreversible international adoptions. The threat of child trafficking was rampant—as it always is in the aftermath of war.

In such an environment, the U.N. undertook no more than any nation

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would want: We could not and would not assume the authority to send Kosovo's children abroad. Instead we worked to get the territory back on its feet and supported the rebuilding of social and legal systems designed to protect children and give the people of Kosovo the opportunity to manage their own affairs. It's clear this was the only responsible course to take.

The Americans who generously support UNICEF (they make up about 12 percent of UNICEF's non-government donations) expect us to live by just such principles. Principles based on experience, research, caring, law, and on respect for the children and nations we serve. They do not want "the power of the purse" over UNICEF, as Lindsey cravenly suggests. And they don't want anyone else to have it either.

Lindsey wrote all this in order to take a shot at UNICEF's work in Iraq. He probably doesn't know that UNICEF's national staff remained in the country throughout the war, taking great risks to protect Iraqi children and save lives by fixing water stations, delivering medicines and food, and organizing campaigns to keep kids away from mine fields. Among those they tried to look out for especially closely during the war: the children in Iraq's many orphanages.

Lindsey has a lot to learn about the true humanitarian grit of UNICEF and its experienced, caring, and unbelievably committed people.

CAROL BELLAMY
Executive Director, UNICEF
New York, NY

LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY RESPONDS: After reviewing Carol Bellamy's letter, I stand by everything I wrote in my piece. Moreover, I reconfirmed crucial details in the piece for accuracy with the person who assisted my wife and me with the adoption process. Since the United Nations funds some of the charitable organizations she works for, she asked that we not print her name. However, I have provided her contact information to the editorial staff of THE WEEKLY STANDARD so that they might independently verify my claims.

There is one area where I agree wholeheartedly with Bellamy. No one I know would ever want to separate a child from his or her family. Indeed, I stress in my piece that many, if not most, war orphans in Kosovo and in Iraq could and should be reunited with their extended families.

Family reunification was not possible, however, in the case of the children that my wife and I tried to adopt, Benjamin and Elizabeth. The local Kosovar leaders and hospital doctors confirmed this. Indeed, because the children were in such a difficult situation, the local officials were enthusiastic about the possibility of out-of-country adoption. So, in our case, family reunification was not an issue, nor was any desire for a "local option." But as the UNICEF worker on the case made clear, no out-of-country adoptions were going to occur as long as she was involved—regardless of the facts.

Contrary to Bellamy's assertion, the State Department does not support the position that "at least two years should be invested in attempting to reunite children with adult relatives." My wife and I have adopted three children from Eastern Europe. In each case, State Department officials in the local consulates assisted us in processing the necessary paperwork. In all cases they were helpful, even supportive, particularly in the case of Thomas, whose mother left Kosovo for Macedonia, thus allowing him to be adopted. None even hinted that a two-year waiting period was either official policy or appropriate.

The State Department policy springs from an interest in child welfare. Bellamy and UNICEF apparently part company not only with us, but with most developmental specialists on whether it is in the best interest of any child to be left in limbo, outside a family structure, for at least two years. Even children who are relatively well cared for in an institutional setting during a long period in their early formative years often suffer some form of developmental impairment.

We also part company with Bellamy on the idea that children should wait in an institution, even after the two-year wait for family members to show up, while all "local options" are exhausted. In a poor, war-torn country such options are scarce.

We can find an echo of Bellamy's views in America's past ban on cross-racial adoptions. The ban caused harm to African-American children in particular, and the ban was eventually struck down in a bipartisan move to prohibit the practice in the 1990s.

A recent UNICEF publication advertised on the UNICEF website speaks of children as the most vulnerable population hit by "the worsening poverty and homelessness, huge increases in mortality rates, erosion of many socialist-era achievements [sic]." Bellamy herself speaks of "the impossible situation in Kosovo at the time" with a "collapse of administrative structure" and "struggling social services." Is this description of the state of affairs really consistent with the notion that local options are both preferable and available?

Bellamy then adds that given all this, "the U.N. undertook no more than any nation would want: We could not and would not assume the authority to send Kosovo's children abroad." It seems therefore that Bellamy is inconsistent by claiming that I was "glaringly wrong and misguided" to have stated that it was the U.N. and UNICEF whose authority blocked Benjamin and Elizabeth from being adopted by us. It was UNICEF's authority, and Bellamy is proud of what they did.

There is no disagreement on the facts. Bellamy and I differ on whether international adoption or multi-year searches for relatives and local options are better for a child. That does not make either of us "glaringly wrong." It is up to the readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD to judge which of us is "misguided."

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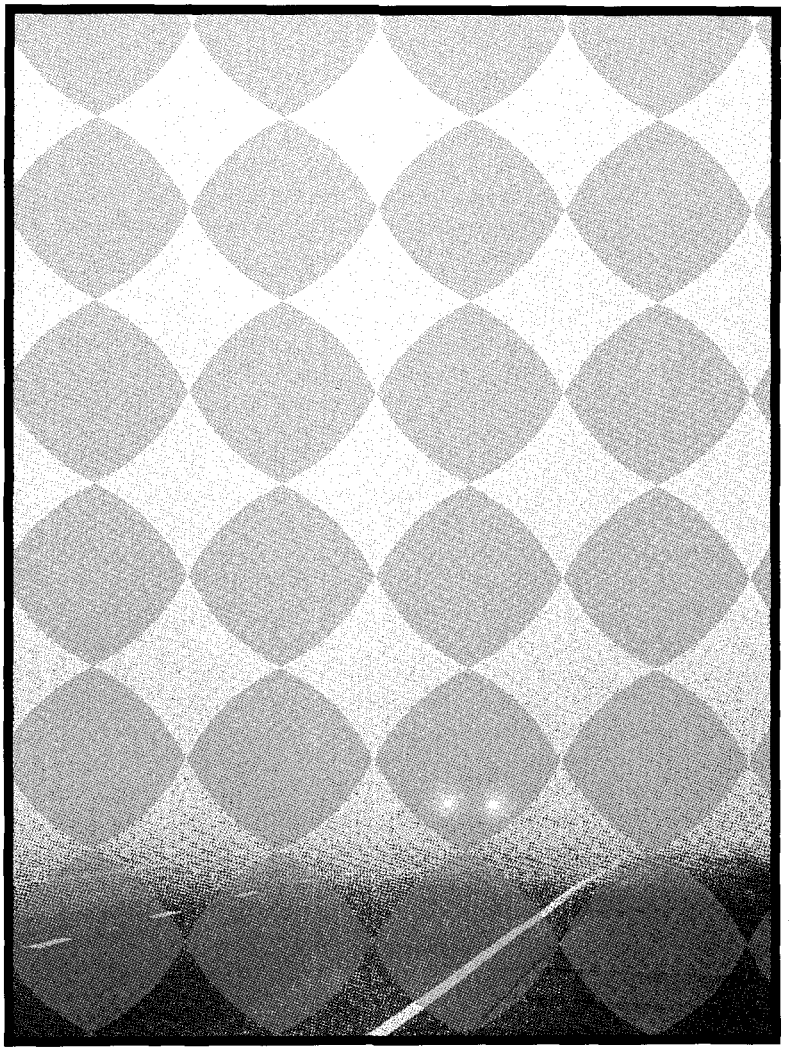
Investment capital and the uncertainty principle.



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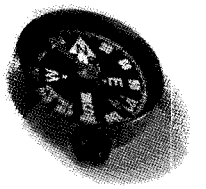

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the weekly Standard

Remember Welfare Reform?

George W. Bush is astoundingly popular with the American people. His approval ratings have hovered around the mid-60s or above for nearly two years—a phenomenon whose staying power cannot be explained by an initial reaction of support for the president after September 11. He has singlehandedly unified the Republican party—a party that seemed to be splitting at the seams before Bush's ascendance. He is even surprisingly popular in Democratic areas. In New Jersey he is more popular than the Democratic governor. In California he is winning support among Hispanics. In New York and Minnesota, he trounces likely Democratic rivals in early presidential surveys. These latter margins will obviously shrink closer to Election Day, but it is nonetheless true that George W. Bush has made a connection with a large swath of the American electorate (while driving his opponents into something of a frenzy).

There are many reasons Bush has made this connection. One of them is that since September 11 he has appealed to the optimism and idealism of the American people. Bush looked around the world, even amidst the horror of terrorism and the challenges of war, and saw a chance to help spread democracy across the Arab world. He seized the opportunity to liberate the peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq. Last week, at the Coast Guard Academy, Bush declared:

> The advance of freedom is more than an interest we pursue. It is a calling we follow. Our country was created in the name and cause of freedom. And if the self-evident truths of our founding are true for us, they are true for all. As a people dedicated to civil rights, we are driven to defend the human rights of others. We are the nation that liberated continents and concentration camps. We are the nation of the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the Peace Corps. We are the nation that ended the oppression of Afghan women, and we are the nation that closed the torture chambers of Iraq.

With such soaring rhetoric, matched by bold but sensible policy, Bush has turned his opponents into churlish conservatives, in the old-fashioned sense of the word. They are the ones who oppose daring change. They are the ones who found themselves sourly defending the Iraqi status quo. They are the ones who ask the American people to walk away from the noblest elements of their creed.

The administration now has an opportunity to grab the mantle of optimism and idealism in domestic policy as well. It was not long ago that Republicans were fatalistic about domestic social issues. They emphasized the intractability of problems such as crime and welfare, and talked about the limits of social policy. But that began to change in the 1990s. Rudy Giuliani, who was then on the Republican fringe, set out to demonstrate that government could reduce crime, and he succeeded. Welfare reformers such as John Engler, Tommy Thompson, and Stephen Goldsmith set out to show that the underclass need not be an inevitable feature of modern life. They found allies at the neoconservative think tanks and foundations, and among many centrist Democrats, and the movement finally led to the welfare reform act of 1996.

The welfare reform bill, passed by a Republican Congress and finally signed by President Clinton, will go down as one of the most successful pieces of legislation of the last few decades. Liberals warned of a looming catastrophe if welfare rolls were reduced and if recipients were forced to work. They were wrong. They misunderstood how the welfare system had induced people to lead dependent and unproductive lives. They underestimated welfare recipients' capacities, and their commitment to rise and succeed.

The welfare rolls have since dropped by 60 percent. The culture of welfare has been transformed, so that recipients are now expected to work. "Be prepared to work, or be prepared to leave," is the sign at one New York job center. Meanwhile, child poverty rates have fallen to a 25-year low, a huge and measurable improvement in the lives of millions of young children. Last week the Brookings Institution released a study on the decline of high-poverty neighborhoods. During the 1970s and 1980s, according to researcher Paul Jargowsky, the number of people living in these areas of concentrated pover-

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ty doubled. But since 1990, the number of people stuck in those neighborhoods has declined by 24 percent, by 2.5 million people.

The welfare reform law is not responsible for all, or even most, of these gains. The decline of concentrated poverty is probably largely the result of recent efforts to tear down the monstrous high-rise public housing projects and replace them with mixed-income low-rise communities. Moreover, the strong 1990s economy enabled millions of welfare recipients to get jobs. Expanded income assistance programs such as the Earned Income Tax Credit helped lift children out of poverty.

Still, welfare reform played an important role. It changed the culture, rearranged the incentives, and acted as a catalyst for other improvements that followed. Welfare reform demonstrated that poverty is not always intractable. Good policies can produce real improvements in people's lives. There are reasons to be optimistic and idealistic even in the face of long-running social problems.

Now welfare reform is up for congressional reauthorization. This has been a remarkably low-key affair, generating little debate or public attention. The welfare activists and the mainstream welfare reporters went looking for horror stories after the law was passed. Failing to find them, they have fallen into a sullen stupor. Among media types, only Mickey Kaus, an enthusiastic reform advocate, seems eager to talk about the record.

More astonishing is how little the White House has done to highlight the reauthorization debate. Here is an issue that puts the Democratic party on the defensive. The Democrats are split, with liberals still sourly defending the *ancien régime*. Extending welfare reform could revive compassionate conservatism, and breathe new life into the hopeful domestic themes that George Bush sounded during the 2000 campaign.

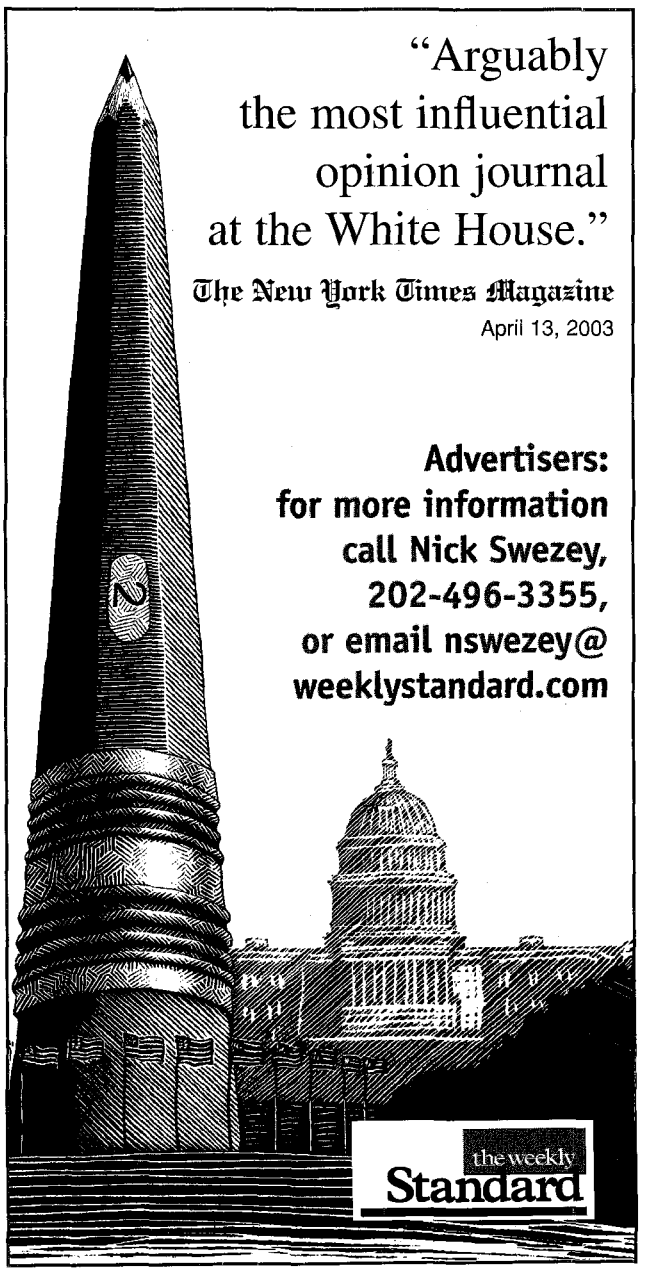
It's true that the White House has proposed a measure that would continue the momentum of welfare reform. It's true that President Bush has delivered a few speeches. But if you were a casual observer of these things, you could easily get the impression that tax cuts comprise the entire Bush domestic policy. Surely this is a mistake.

There are sound policy reasons to highlight welfare reform. The progress we have made in fighting poverty is slowing. In the current economy, welfare rolls are beginning to inch up again. What's more, we still have a way to go in helping families get off public support permanently. Mothers are now more likely to have jobs, but still rely on a panoply of federal programs and subsidies. As Douglas Besharov of the American Enterprise Institute notes in a judicious essay in the Winter 2003 issue of the *Public Interest*, "Liberals were . . . right about the difficulty most mothers leaving welfare would have in becoming financially self-sufficient."

Moreover, states have taken advantage of loopholes in the law to excuse welfare recipients from work requirements. In Massachusetts, for example, only 6 percent of the state's welfare recipients have jobs, and over 90 percent are exempt from work requirements. There is still little institutionalized policy support for marriage, the greatest of all anti-poverty programs.

The Bush administration has tried to close these loopholes, but the entire reauthorization is stalled in Congress—a Republican Congress. It's time to turn up the volume and the heat on this whole issue. It's time to bring the moral conviction and optimistic spirit that has characterized Bush's foreign policy home to the domestic front.

—David Brooks, for the Editors



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The President as Priapist

Too much energy in the executive.

BY ARNOLD BEICHMAN

ALL THE TALK about President Kennedy and his sexual exploits with a White House intern is full of leers and jeers and smutty comparisons to President Clinton. There has been little talk, though, about how reckless behavior may have affected his ability to function as chief executive.

There is some evidence that those around Kennedy treated him with less respect than is due the American president. Could it be because they perceived him as the priapist he was and were contemptuous? Turn, for example, to the marvelous narrative history published in 1991 by Michael R. Beschloss—*The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963*—which contains many eye-opening interviews with participants in the crisis years. Beschloss found disquieting evidence that Kennedy's womanizing troubled statesmen like British prime minister Harold Macmillan. This same behavior also may have caused some of his subordinates to doubt his competence and not only to defy his leadership, but to berate him for exercising it.

For example, on Sunday, October 28, 1962, a startling event occurred in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Only a few hours earlier, the White House had received welcome news from Moscow: Khrushchev would remove the nuclear missiles he had installed in Cuba. Khrushchev's blink meant that the U.S. airstrike against Cuba planned for the following Tuesday could now be canceled. The risk of a superpower global confrontation was over at least for a time, although, as Beschloss points out, quite a price was paid by Kennedy to Khrushchev for that victory: a pledge not to invade Cuba and unilateral removal of U.S. missile bases in Turkey without consultation of either NATO or Turkey.

A triumphant President Kennedy had called in two members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral George Anderson and Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis LeMay. He thanked them, in the president's words, "for your advice and your counsel and your behavior during this very, very difficult period."

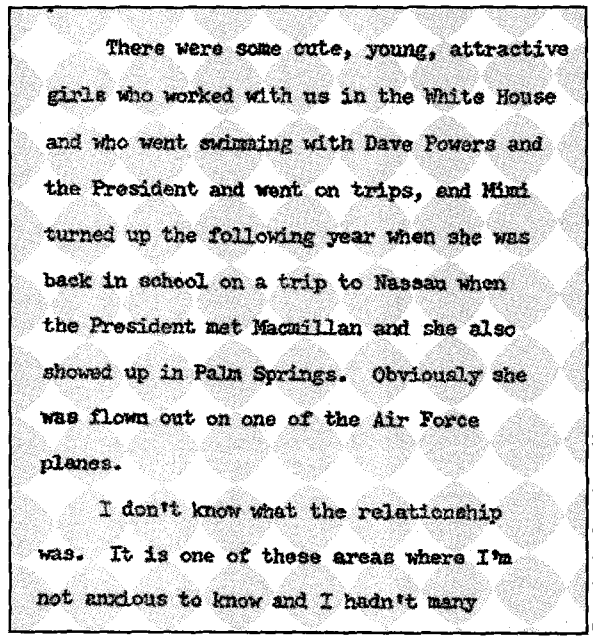
Then, according to Beschloss, there ensued a stunning display of rage by two military subordinates directly at their commander in chief:

> Admiral Anderson cried out, "We have been had." General LeMay pounded the table: "It's the greatest defeat in our history, Mr. President. . . . *We should invade today!*" McNamara looked at Kennedy and noticed that "he was absolutely shocked. He was stuttering in reply" [italics in original].

Beschloss describes another such incident at Camp David, this time involving a presidential peer. Following the humbling 1961 Bay of Pigs misadventure, President Kennedy held a private meeting with his predecessor. Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower listened to the explanations of why the invasion of Cuba had failed. He then upbraided President Kennedy in barracks language for not supplying the essential air cover and concluded with this rather contemptuous guideline: "I believe there is only one thing to do when you go into this kind of thing: It must be a success."

Beschloss was not doing a Kitty Kelley life-and-loves catalogue about Kennedy's bedroom adventurism. "Whether the President wished to sleep with women not his wife," he wrote, "does not concern the historian of his diplomacy. What is of importance is that from all the evidence we have, Kennedy made no systematic effort to ensure, by security investigation or otherwise, that all of the women with whom he was involved lacked the motive or the ability to use evidence of their relationship to blackmail him on behalf of a hostile government or organization."

But there is a reason that responsible historians will be unable to avoid



There were some cute, young, attractive girls who worked with us in the White House and who went swimming with Dave Powers and the President and went on trips, and Mimi turned up the following year when she was back in school on a trip to Nassau when the President met Macmillan and she also showed up in Palm Springs. Obviously she was flown out on one of the Air Force planes.

I don't know what the relationship was. It is one of these areas where I'm not anxious to know and I hadn't many

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The latest revelations came from a 1964 interview with a White House aide, uncovered by historian Robert Dallek and recently unsealed by the JFK Library.

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discussing President Kennedy's reckless sex life. It was a significant factor in how his peers sized him up.

So far as we know, there was no blackmail or scandal during the Kennedy years. The historian quotes from the diary of Hervé Alphand, then French ambassador, that President Kennedy's "desires are difficult to satisfy without raising fears of scandal and its use by his political enemies. This might happen one day, because he does not take sufficient precautions in this Puritan country." Prime Minister Macmillan felt that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty had been badly negotiated with Chairman Khrushchev by President Kennedy because he was "weakened by constantly having all those girls, every day."

I can add something from personal knowledge—as told to me by the late Arthur J. Goldberg, then secretary of labor. Kennedy's sex exploits often occurred in New York's Carlyle Hotel on Madison Ave. and East 76th Street, where he could enjoy the privacy not available at the White House. Kennedy stayed in the Carlyle's huge penthouse with a magnificent view of Central Park from its wall-sized picture window. The lady of choice would arrive—perhaps after a cocktail party hosted by Henry Fonda at an East Side brownstone. The entourage of White House correspondents who traveled with the president would be informed at a late afternoon briefing by Pierre Salinger that "the lid was on," and they were free to disport themselves as they pleased because there would be no breaking news or official announcements. The assignation would actually take place in rooms on the floor below the penthouse, where the chosen lady could arrive unseen by the Secret Service guards stationed outside the penthouse doors. Kennedy would then pop down a back staircase and return at his leisure to the presidential bedroom in the penthouse.

The full story of Kennedy the priapist will never be known, because those who know rarely talk, and those who talk do not know the whole story. ♦

The No-Nukes Party

The Mondale Democrats are alive and well in the U.S. Senate. BY DANIEL MCKIVERGAN

SUPPOSE A FEW YEARS FROM NOW, a nation hostile to the United States and its allies is manufacturing biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons in a super-hardened bunker deep underground. And suppose the miscreant nation has ties to terrorist organizations dedicated to killing as many Americans as they can. The U.S. president judges the facility a major national security threat and asks the military to come up with options for taking out the complex should force be necessary.

Just such a scenario—and our lack of any real solution to the problem—is what prompted Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to seek to include language in the 2004 Defense Authorization bill that would repeal a 10-year-old ban on all "research and development which could lead to the production by the United States of a new low-yield nuclear weapon, including a precision low-yield warhead." Lifting the ban would allow the Pentagon to study the effects of using a low-yield nuclear deep-earth penetrating weapon against a bunker complex, as well as the feasibility of using conventional munitions. "The threat," Joint Chiefs chairman Richard Myers said last week, "in many cases is going underground."

Moreover, as Myers also explained, hitting a chemical or biological bunker with a conventional weapon may have a disastrous impact in some circumstances. Anthrax spores, say, or chemical compounds that would be destroyed by the gamma rays and high heat of a low-yield nuclear device might actually be spread in the aftermath of a conventional attack.

Most Republicans undoubtedly agreed with Rumsfeld that it's only prudent "to look at a variety of different ways, conceivably, to develop the ability to reach a deeply buried target." Not so Senate Democrats. When the defense authorization bill reached the Senate floor last week, Democrats launched a well-organized assault on the proposal with arguments reminiscent of the 1980s, when a nuclear freeze was all the rage in Democratic circles.

Senators Dianne Feinstein and Ted Kennedy led the charge by offering an amendment to keep the ban in place. They argued that repealing it would have no military benefit, which must have been news to Air Force chief of staff John Jumper, who told the Senate Armed Services Committee that repealing the ban "is required in order to evaluate all potential options to meet current and emerging combatant commanders' requirements."

The senators argued, too, that repealing the ban would be the height of proliferation hypocrisy. "We are telling others not to develop nuclear weapons," said Feinstein, yet we are behaving as if it were "all right for us to go out and begin to develop weapons." The fact that nations like Iran and North Korea have been pursuing nuclear weapons despite the existence of the ban seems lost on Feinstein, as does the silliness of believing that keeping the ban will encourage tyrants like

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Kim Jong Il to forgo their nuclear ambitions.

If anything, Rumsfeld argued last week, "to the extent the United States is prohibited from studying the use of such weapons, for example, for a deep earth penetrator, the effect in the world is that it tells the world that they're wise to invest in going underground." Finally, the Democratic senators argued that President Bush's national security doctrine in general was destabilizing and would encourage a renewed nuclear arms race.

Astonishingly, the entire Democratic caucus—with the notable exceptions of Georgia's Zell Miller, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, and Indiana's Evan Bayh—supported the Feinstein-Kennedy amendment, which all but one Republican, Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island, opposed. Not only did Democrats vote for it, but a parade of them trooped to the Senate floor to deliver remarks that sounded as if they'd been lifted from a Walter Mondale campaign speech attacking President Reagan's ultimately successful nuclear policy toward the Soviet Union.

While Feinstein found the administration's position "chilling and even diabolical," Ted Kennedy said his colleagues had to make a simple calculation in deciding whether or not to vote for the Democratic amendment: "You're either for nuclear war, or you're not." Illinois's Dick Durbin said the bill is a "declaration that the United States is prepared to launch a nuclear arms race in the world again." "Perilous" is how Russ Feingold of Wisconsin characterized the president's policy; "crazy" and "dangerously destabilizing" were the choice words of Minnesota's Mark Dayton.

Ironically, the day after the vote on Feinstein-Kennedy, former Gore campaign manager Donna Brazile and Clinton State Department official Timothy Bergreen wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* column that Americans "believe that we Democrats are weak and indecisive when it comes to standing up to dictators and terrorists, and when it comes to the primary responsibility of government: defending the nation." "What Would Scoop Do?" was the title of their op-ed. My guess is that Scoop Jackson—who, they wrote, was "the Democratic mentor of some of today's most prominent Republican hawks"—would have voted a little differently on Feinstein-Kennedy from, say, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd, Carl Levin, Tom Daschle, Joe Lieberman, and just about every other Democrat in the Senate. ♦

Michael Ramirez

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What Hath Strauss Wrought?

Misreading a political philosopher.

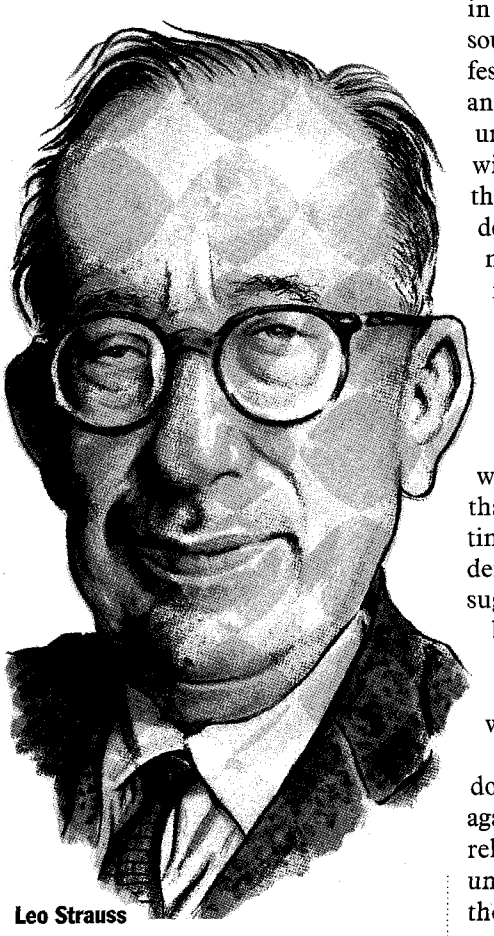
BY PETER BERKOWITZ

THE *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Boston Globe*, among others, have sounded the alarm: The Bush administration, particularly its foreign policy team, is in the grip of a coterie of neoconservative intellectuals who are themselves in the grip of the antidemocratic and illiberal teachings of Leo Strauss, a political philosopher who taught at the University of Chicago in the '50s and '60s and who died in 1973.

On its face, this scenario is wildly implausible. It supposes that President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and National Security Adviser Rice, non-Straussians by all accounts, are stooges and dupes. It insinuates that neoconservative intellectuals—Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is at the top of everybody's list—have craftily ascended to positions of power in the federal government from which they aim to implement Strauss's teachings. And it invests Strauss, a student of political philosophy whose life's work consisted in writing learnedly about thinkers from Plato to Heidegger, and sharing his discoveries with students, with almost superhuman powers: Through the force of his ideas, we are told, this scholar and teacher is able, a generation and a half after his death, to command the respect and loyalty—and indeed, to compel the actions—of highly successful and well-placed individuals not only in politics but in the media and the academy.

Peter Berkowitz teaches at George Mason University School of Law and is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Despite its wild implausibility, the scenario is in one important respect true. And that has to do with the influence of Leo Strauss on a generation of neoconservative thinkers, some of whom are active in our politics (and some of whom can even be found writing in these pages).



Leo Strauss

Illustration by Drew Friedman

Judging from the recent hubbub, which restates an accusation that has gained much currency in the academy, that influence is nefarious. Strauss is said to be an elitist who scorned democracy. He is attacked as an atheist who encouraged his students to see through the falseness of religion, while manipulating it to discipline and mollify the masses. And the realization of his ideas, we are warned, requires his followers to establish by force of arms a foreign empire for America.

These accusations, similar versions of which are often leveled at neoconservatives, are nonsense, and in parts vicious nonsense. Yet the ideas that the accusations pervert are those of Strauss, and when those ideas are restored to their true shape they can be seen as articulating core neoconservative convictions.

Strauss was not an elitist—but he was a lover of excellence. He believed in the cultivation of the mind, and sought to restore respect for its manifestation in the ambition for honor and nobility in the soul, which he understood to be not only compatible with but essential to democracy. On the occasion of Winston Churchill's death, he told his class that "We have no higher duty, and no more pressing duty, than to remind ourselves and our students, of political greatness, human greatness, of the peaks of human excellence." Strauss also shared Churchill's famous praise of democracy as the worst regime except for all the others that have been tried from time to time. Although he regarded modern democracy as flawed, it is, Strauss suggested, the form of government best suited to the protection and enjoyment of human liberty, and therefore should be defended wholeheartedly.

Strauss may have been a religious doubter, but he showed time and again that the question of the truth of religion seemed to have been left unsettled by the greatest figures in the history of political philosophy, and that therefore religious teachings, which concern man's highest and deepest longings, must be studied with care and an open mind. He loved the Hebrew Bible and sought to show that it was rich in wisdom about the human condition. He saw that religion could be either salutary

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or destructive, depending on the circumstances and the religious teaching in question. And he certainly believed that in our day religion could play a positive role in counteracting the tendency of liberal democracy to indiscriminately break down custom and convention.

Finally, Strauss was not a proponent of American empire—but he did teach the importance of American strength in defense of liberty. Writing in the midst of the Cold War, as a refugee from Nazi Germany and as a student of tyranny, Strauss insisted that totalitarians of the left and the right posed a profound threat to liberal democracy—a threat that liberal democrats tended to underestimate because of their habit of supposing that all individuals and nations are as open to reason and persuasion as liberal democrats consider themselves to be. Strauss encouraged liberal democracies to be strong in defending themselves and forceful in conducting a foreign policy in accord with their principles.

Strauss was no ordinary liberal democrat, but he was a staunch friend of liberal democracy. The urgency of defending liberal democracy by encouraging its virtues, combating its vices, and never losing sight of its enemies is the great political lesson that those of his students who became neoconservatives embraced. To be sure, Strauss seemed to prefer the classical Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle to modern political philosophy. He was a proud Jew and took the claims of religion with utmost seriousness while keeping his distance from organized religion. He dwelled at length on liberal democracy's undemocratic and illiberal tendencies, in part because he loved the truth and in part because he was devoted to America's well-being. He was the kind of friend who makes one better by constantly exhibiting, through example and argument, the look of excellence. Not always an easy sort of friend, but the sort of friend, you would think, whom true liberals in every time and place would appreciate. ♦

Shoulder to Shoulder

Strengthening the U.S.-Philippine alliance.

BY VICTORINO MATUS

WHILE DOZENS of world leaders have come to Washington to meet President Bush, only three have been accorded all the ruffles and flourishes of an official state visit—Mexico's Vicente Fox, Aleksander Kwasniewski of Poland, and, just last week, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines. Besides the fact that Bush much prefers informal gatherings, there is no doubt the president chooses his distinguished guests purposefully.

On the South Lawn last Monday, following a 21-gun salute, Bush spoke of "an alliance that remains strong, an alliance that is essential to the peace of the Pacific." He invoked the memory of Bataan and Corregidor where "our soldiers fought and died together," as Filipino veterans, now in their 80s, waved flags and cheered. By the end of the visit (following an elaborate state dinner), Arroyo walked away with three major victories in hand.

First, the White House agreed to a $100 million military aid package, expected to consist of materiel for counterterrorist operations, including helicopters and night vision goggles. Second, during the joint press conference, Bush announced that the Philippines will be designated a "major non-NATO ally" on a par with Australia, Israel, and Egypt. This will allow even closer military collaboration, giving Manila "greater access to American defense equipment and supplies," said the president. Finally, the two countries agreed to resume the so-called Balikatan ("shoulder-to-shoulder" in Tagalog) exercises on the southern island of Mindanao, involving, according to some estimates, as many as 1,800 U.S. troops.

It is this last arrangement that has proven to be most contentious, since the Philippine constitution does not permit foreign troops to fight on its soil. But Bush has been careful to point out that Marines and Special Forces will be serving as trainers and instructors to the country's armed forces, who've been in a protracted struggle with Muslim separatists who want to create a radical Islamic republic in the south.

The main group in Manila's crosshairs is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which in recent months has led a bombing campaign that has left more than 200 people dead. Arroyo has issued an ultimatum to the group, saying they have until June 1 to reach a negotiated peace or else. There are strong indications that the guerrillas prefer "or else," and that a war will ensue that could prove costly to the government—hence the need for a U.S. presence.

The upcoming "training exercise" is thus, from Washington's point of view, yet another front in the war on terror. The main question is how closely the Muslim rebels there are tied to al Qaeda's international conspiracy. According to Paul Burton, an editor at Jane's Information Group and expert on Southeast Asia, "the chair of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Hashim Salamat, studied in Cairo and Saudi Arabia. Upon returning to the Philippines, he became a religious leader. Several of his cadres trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan in the 1980s. And a number of secret

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AFP / Jay Directo

Soldiers in Jolo, Philippines, after an attack by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

rebel camps have played host to members of Jemaah Islamiyah," the notorious Indonesian-based terrorist network that killed more than 200 people in the Bali nightclub bombings.

Over the last 10 years, the Philippines became a popular destination for a number of Middle Eastern terrorists, including Ramzi Yousef, a plotter in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, al Qaeda mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, and Muhammad Jamal Khalifa, a key backer of Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim terror group in the Philippines responsible for the murders of three Americans. Khalifa is a brother-in-law of Osama bin Laden.

"There is no doubt that Southeast Asia will be the new haven for terrorists," suggests a senior State Department official who asked to remain anonymous. "There are all sorts of connections, especially with Libya." Burton agrees: "Libya has been essential in funding the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. In August 2001, Tripoli even held talks with the group and pledged economic aid, ostensibly for roads and mosques." There were also links between Abu Sayyaf and Saddam Hussein's regime. Husham Hussein, an Iraqi diplomat, was recently expelled from the Philippines after the Manila government claimed he had been in contact with an Abu Sayyaf rebel. The group claimed to have been receiving $20,000 a year from Iraq.

The Bush administration recognizes that because of these connections, the Philippines is an important ally in fighting terrorism. Filipinos in large part welcome the presence of U.S. forces, with a few reservations. "Balikatan strengthens that bond for the two governments and brings much needed training for the Philippine military to defend the country against terrorism," says Amina Rasul, an ex-cabinet member and adviser to former president Fidel Ramos. Rasul stresses that U.S. involvement in actual combat must not happen for constitutional reasons and that Americans shouldn't want it to happen. "As some leaders in government move to have the Moro Islamic Liberation Front declared a terrorist organization, the United States would be embroiled in the ethnic conflict between Muslim insurgents and the government." She is right about the dangers in taking on the rebels directly. Although Abu Sayyaf numbers less than 500, there are more than 12,000 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Arroyo was one of the first leaders to call Bush after September 11 and one of the few in Asia who supported the war in Iraq. The White House is well aware of this. Though she isn't seeking reelection, Arroyo hopes to lay a foundation for further cooperation. "I hope ever more countries join this partnership" against terror, she said during the state dinner. "Two are better than one. Three are harder to break. Four and more—nothing can prevail against them." Bush looked on approvingly. ♦

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Reading, Writing, and Extremism

What they are teaching in Saudi-financed American schools. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

TO WHAT DEGREE does the threat of global terror embody the Wahhabi beliefs taught by the official sect in Saudi Arabia, beliefs the desert kingdom still seeks to impose throughout the Muslim world and to spread to the non-Muslim world as well? And what role does the international network of Saudi-funded Muslim educational institutions play in the spread of the extremist ideology, which is a prerequisite for the recruitment of terrorists?

In answering these questions, it is worth examining the numerous such schools in the United States. They aren't madrassas, or religious schools of the kind found in majority-Muslim countries (nor are all madrassas centers of extremist indoctrination). Rather, these schools appear to be American-style religious elementary, secondary, and college-level educational institutions teaching a full range of academic subjects. Nevertheless, the views they propagate are just as conducive to political extremism and even terrorism as those taught in the extremist madrasas of Pakistan or Saudi Arabia itself. Most of these institutions call themselves "Islamic academies." And they are found all over the United States, from Baton Rouge to Sacramento, and from Huntsville, Alabama, to Aurora, Colorado.

In March 2002, the official Saudi newspaper *Ain Al-Yaqeen* described royal expenditures abroad for spreading the faith as "astronomical." It traced to Saudi funding no fewer than 1,500 mosques, 202 colleges, and some 2,000 schools for Muslim children "in non-Islamic countries in Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia."

The Saudi embassy in Washington was instrumental in creating an American model program for schoolchildren in the Islamic Saudi Academy (ISA, *www.saudiacademy.net*), located in Fairfax County and Alexandria, Virginia. ISA withdrew from the Virginia Association of Independent Schools in 2002 after an inquiry into its funding and administration, as well as publicity in the *Washington Post* about the harshness of its Wahhabi curriculum. A February 25, 2002, story in the *Post* quoted an 11th-grade textbook, for example, to the effect that on the Day of Judgment, the trees will say, "Oh Muslim, Oh servant of God, here is a Jew hiding behind me. Come here and kill him."

The same article reported that "several students of different ages . . . said that in Islamic studies, they are taught that it is better to shun and even to dislike Christians, Jews, and Shiite Muslims." One teenager told the *Post*, some teachers "'teach students that whoever is kuffar [non-Muslim], it is okay for you' to hurt or steal from that person." But the embarrassment apparently was fleeting: Early in 2003, ISA received clearance from Loudoun County, Va., to construct an $80 million complex on 100 acres. ISA spent $27 million in the decade 1984-94, and reported a student body of 1,300 in 1999.

For the Saudi-Wahhabis, education and politics are inextricably merged. In 1999, the Saudi embassy in Washington announced a grant by the Islamic Development Bank of $250,000 to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the main organ of the Wahhabi lobby in America, for the purchase of land in Washington, to be used in the construction of "an education and research center." Similarly, front groups interfacing between Wahhabi-Saudi money movers (some of them under federal suspicion as terror backers) and the broader American public include two institutions active in the field of religious education: the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS) in Leesburg, Virginia, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), in Herndon, Virginia. The involvement of GSISS in the promotion of extremism is especially significant in that this school is credentialed by the Department of Defense to certify Muslim chaplains for the U.S. armed forces. Its similar role in certifying imams for work in federal and state prison systems has prompted a lawsuit by four non-Wahhabi Muslim plaintiffs in the New York prison system.

A related organization is the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America (IIASA), which is operated, in apparent violation of diplomatic norms, as an ordinary American educational institution, though it is controlled by the Islamic Affairs Department of the Saudi embassy.

Islamic academies all over the United States use curricula developed by GSISS and IIASA. Many also use books disseminated by the IQRA' International Educational Foundation, Inc. and its Book Center, in Chicago. One such book, *The Clear Victory*, by Abdassamad Clarke, describes an early victory by Muslim armies, ending in a peace treaty. It includes the declaration, ascribed to a follower of Muhammad with regard to opponents of Islam, "If anyone troubles us, we will cut

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off his head." The "Riyadh translation" of the Koran into English, distributed to schools by IQRA', includes an appendix delivering a call to jihad. These are not messages mainstream Muslim educators wish to convey to their students.

One teacher at a non-Wahhabi Muslim school who is critical of extremism and requests anonymity explained her objections in a letter to IQRA': "We will no longer accept any books published in Saudi Arabia because of the Wahhabi mentality" found therein. The letter continues, "The Wahhabi ideology distorts the life of our Prophet in order to justify some misconstrued notion that Muslims must declare a worldwide jihad. I am more and more disgusted by this blind, political view which is not the solution to the situation of the Muslims today, but rather the cause of [our] problems."

The close relationship between schools and other Wahhabi entities is evident on their websites. Thus, the "Politics" button on the website of the Toledo Islamic Academy, in Toledo, Ohio (*www.toledomuslims.com*), jumps directly to the homepage of the United Muslim Association of Toledo, which as of May 2003 urges visitors to send a pre-drafted e-mail to Fox News protesting the appearance of expert Daniel Pipes and investigator Steven Emerson on Brit Hume's show. A quintessential Wahhabi rant, the e-mail calls the two men hatemongers, anti-Semites, bigots, crooks, clowns, and "despicable excuses for human beings." Pipes and Emerson are controversial; the trademark Wahhabi contribution is to dehumanize them by violent language.

Traditional, anti-extremist American Muslims are waging a concerted fight against the infiltration of radicalism into their community. Bottom line: Surely American schools should not be misused to indoctrinate young people in extremism. ♦

Free Trade at Last?

Time to stop holding Taiwan at arm's length.

BY GREGORY MASTEL

MAINTAINING RELATIONS with both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China has posed a series of challenges to American diplomacy. And things have only become more difficult as Taiwan has completed a transition from authoritarian rule to true democracy, while mainland China remains a dictatorship with a grievous human rights record. Thus it is no longer appropriate that the job of striking a balance between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China be left to professional diplomats and other conciliatory China hands. Their approach is now out of touch with core American values as the United States continues to find its relationship with Taiwan, a model new democracy, constrained by the world's leading authoritarian power, China.

The last three administrations have worked—with varying degrees of enthusiasm—to define a new relationship with Taiwan that recognizes and rewards the progress Taiwan has made. This has included the sale of defensive armaments, demonstrations of U.S. military support, and clearing of the way for Taiwan's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Recent trends and events suggest it is time to take the next step and introduce a free trade agreement (FTA) with Taiwan.

As illustrated by the recent SARS crisis, it is critical that Taiwan's involvement in the international community increase. The spread of SARS from China to Taiwan and the World Health Organization's reluctance to help Taiwan fight the infection demonstrates that the world would be better protected if Taiwan were a member of the WHO. At the very least, Taiwan's efforts to control the disease have offered a stark contrast with Beijing's efforts to cover it up. Despite all this Beijing's bullying has again barred Taiwan from entering the WHO.

But while WHO membership depends on the international community's standing up to Beijing, Washington can move ahead on its own to establish a U.S.-Taiwan Free Trade Agreement.

The economic progress made by Taiwan during its transition to democracy is simply amazing. By building a market-driven, export-oriented economy, Taiwan has lifted its per capita GDP from well under $1,000 per year to about $13,000. Taiwan is now one of the ten largest trading powers in the world and a significant presence in many industrial and high tech sectors. It is also America's 8th-largest trading partner, purchasing more from the United States in most recent years than its mainland neighbor. Many U.S. companies—AT&T, Citibank, DuPont, and Microsoft—have major presences in Taiwan. For their part, Taiwanese companies have invested $600 million in the United States.

Taiwan and the United States have had occasional disputes over the size of the bilateral trade imbalance, agriculture, and, more recently, intellectual property protections. Nevertheless, this large and expanding economic relationship has been beneficial to the United States and instrumental in Taiwan's transition to democracy. While the U.S. security guarantee to Taiwan has certainly been critical, the presence of a strong trade tie with the United States has been at least as important to the building of modern Taiwan.

Currently, the United States has FTAs with Israel, Canada, Mexico, and

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Jordan. Congress last year gave the green light for more FTAs. New agreements have been negotiated with Singapore and Chile and will likely be approved by Congress later in the year. The United States is also negotiating FTAs with Morocco, South Africa, Australia, and five Central American countries. President Bush has announced that he hopes to negotiate a broad FTA with many Middle Eastern countries over the next decade. Perhaps another dozen countries are seeking agreements with the United States.

FTAs provide an attractive avenue for pursuing economic growth, while encouraging reform in strategically important regions and strengthening relationships with key allies. Especially in a time of tight budgets, the Bush administration's fondness for FTAs is understandable and, indeed, laudable. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has to date overlooked Taiwan on the list of potential FTA partners.

This oversight is hard to understand since Taiwan already has a successful trading relationship with the United States. In fact, Taiwan seems a more promising market for the United States than any of the countries with whom FTA negotiations are currently underway. In a study of the likely effects of an FTA between the United States and Taiwan, the U.S. International Trade Commission—the government's trade think tank—concluded that both the United States and Taiwan would benefit. American farmers, motor vehicle manufacturers, and equipment manufacturers stand to make particular gains in a more open Taiwan market.

Considered from the perspective of business strategy, an FTA would allow U.S. companies to better compete in Taiwan with their rivals in Japan and Europe. Taiwan could even develop into a gateway through which U.S. companies might better access other Asian markets. Furthermore, an economically stable, democratic country in Asia that is a strong ally of the United States has obvious value as a role model for other would-be democracies, including, at some point, China. Conversely, economic instability in Taiwan could destabilize the region and increase the likelihood of a U.S.-China-Taiwan conflict.

Some have argued the United States should hold back on an FTA with Taiwan because of outstanding trade issues, particularly intellectual property protections, which no one disputes is a serious issue. In fact, Taiwan is currently working to improve intellectual property protections for its own sake as well as to answer U.S. concerns. Considered from a tactical perspective, however, such problems argue for pursuing an FTA, not holding back. In the case of Mexico, the negotiations that led to an FTA provided a tremendous opportunity to address thorny issues relating to intellectual property and agriculture. Indeed, more progress would be made on behalf of intellectual property rights and, for example, export opportunities through FTA negotiations than by any other approach.

Of course, the real reason FTA talks with Taiwan are not already underway is fear of upsetting China. Indeed, Beijing would likely object to any FTA talks between the United States and Taiwan, but without justification. Taiwan is already a member of the WTO and the United States has negotiated many trade agreements with Taiwan over the years. Even now, Taiwan is negotiating FTAs with other countries, such as Panama. In short, a U.S.-Taiwan FTA raises no issues not addressed in other contexts.

There is no question China is an important member of the world community. Beijing sits on the U.N. Security Council and could, for instance, play a constructive role in containing North Korea. But this is no reason for the United States to slight a reliable friend and ally. Instead, we should continue pursuing a realistic and responsible framework for policy toward Taiwan that advances our mutual interests. The next step is building an economic bridge between Washington and Taipei in the form of a new free trade agreement, which will allow both countries to build their economies, encourage further reform in Taiwan, and cement a core relationship between free market democracies. ♦

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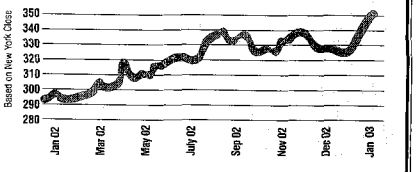

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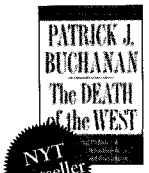

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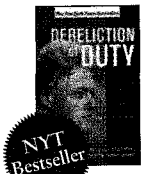

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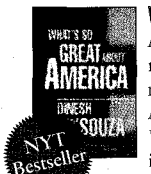

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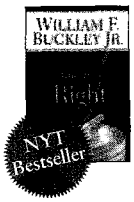

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The Commander

How Tommy Franks won the Iraq war

By Fred Barnes

Tampa, Florida

President Bush had a slightly anxious question for General Tommy Franks, the commander of American and allied forces in Iraq. It was a week or so before the fighting began, and Bush was looking at a war plan with a dizzying array of separate but simultaneous actions, plus options and alternatives. It looked risky. "Is it normal for a war plan to have this many variables this late in the day?" the president asked.

It was anything but normal. But Franks, a self-confident artilleryman who had spent a year fashioning the plan in hands-on collaboration with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, reassured the president he'd made the right call in adopting it. Franks believes warfare requires risk—"prudent risk" or "moderate risk" is how he puts it—but never a gamble. He mentioned to Bush the plan involved political circumstances in Iraq's neighborhood which themselves had many variables.

The principal reason for the variables was the war plan itself. It represented a radically new kind of warfare that was bound to accelerate the transformation of the American military and redefine the concept of "overwhelming force." In Iraq, the plan meant that three different ground wars would be fought at the same time: a secret commando war in western Iraq, a war relying on Kurdish troops in the north, and an invasion by three divisions of American and British soldiers from the south. And in Franks's view there were two other fronts—the air and information (or mind-game) wars.

A myth surrounds the war plan. It is that Rumsfeld forced a new paradigm of warfare on an unimaginative and deeply conventional Franks. This isn't true. Rumsfeld was particularly insistent about deploying special operations forces—the Delta Force, Navy Seals, Army Rangers. And he has campaigned noisily for the transformation of the military into a smaller, more mobile, and less risk-averse force.

But the plan belonged to Franks, who began thinking about Iraq while the war in Afghanistan was still being fought. When he joined the president at his Crawford, Texas, ranch in December 2001, he promised "a small option [for Iraq] that's extremely fast and very risky" if war with Iraq became necessary—a plan quite different from that of the Gulf War a dozen years earlier.

With the Franks plan, American forces repeatedly achieved tactical surprise in the war, notably when American, British, and Australian special forces from Jordan captured Iraq's Scud missile sites in western Iraq two days before the larger war began. Iraqi defenders there "didn't have a lot of time to be caught by surprise because we killed them," Franks said in an interview last week at Central Command headquarters in Tampa. "I have to believe the regime was surprised."

There's a debate over whether operational (or strategic) surprise was attained—that is, something approaching total surprise of the Pearl Harbor variety. Franks thinks it was. Even though Saddam Hussein was aware of the gradual military buildup just outside Iraq, he was led to believe an attack was weeks away at the earliest and might still be averted altogether. The strongest evidence of operational surprise is that the Iraqi army neither went on the attack nor mounted a serious defense of any region, installation, or city, Baghdad included.

In any case, the swift victory in Iraq following the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan has stamped Franks, 57, as the greatest American military leader since Douglas MacArthur a half century ago. He has few competitors. General Creighton Abrams changed the course of the Vietnam war, but it was lost anyway. General Norman Schwarzkopf waged a two-dimensional war in 1991 that saw Iraqis decimated by B-52s and driven out of Kuwait. But Schwarzkopf erred gravely by letting Iraq keep the helicopters it subsequently used to kill thousands of Shias. General Wesley Clark's victory over Serbia involved only bombers flying at 35,000 feet, nothing more.

At the White House, Bush and Vice President Cheney are admirers. They believe Franks is the only general who could have scripted a revolutionary war plan for Iraq, dealt effectively with an overbearing defense secretary, suppressed longstanding rivalries among the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, and directed allied forces to victory in less than three weeks.

Yet Franks, who will retire in July, remains a little-

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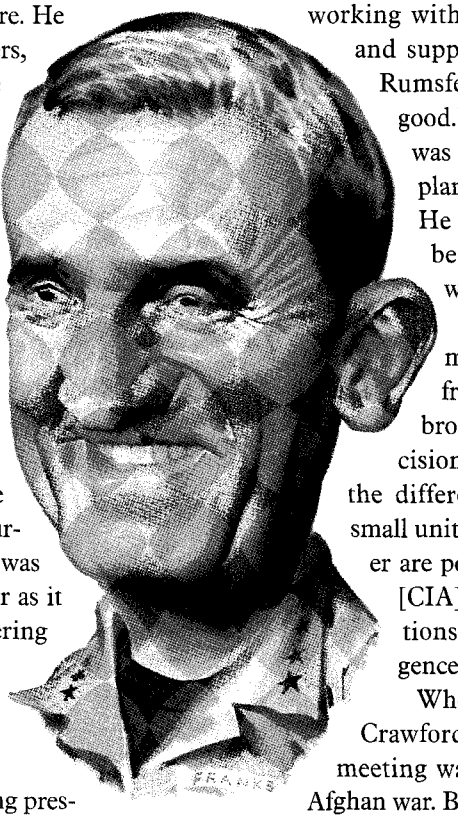
known figure and not quite an identifiable national celebrity. He has gone out of his way to differentiate himself from Schwarzkopf, the high profile Gulf War commander who delivered energetic press briefings almost daily. The press clamored for Franks to brief, but he did so only three times during his weeks in the war zone. When he returned to Tampa last month, there was no victory ceremony or parade. Franks and his top aides were met by their families at the MacDill Air Force Base terminal in Tampa and gathered privately afterwards. There was no TV coverage.

During the war, Franks ordered his subordinates, particularly his civilian public affairs aide, Jim Wilkinson, to talk to reporters and relieve him of that chore. He told aides his constituents were the mothers, fathers, and spouses of the troops in the field. And they wanted him to concentrate on winning the war, not waste time with television interviews. "We got hammered—I mean really hammered—by the press because Franks was invisible," an aide said. "He just didn't care."

After Private Jessica Lynch was snatched from an Iraqi hospital, Franks was wary of publicizing the rescue excessively. He reminded aides of the warning by Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry against spiking the football in the end zone after a touchdown. You don't want to look surprised at having scored. The actual rescue was watched live by Franks's aides on a monitor as it was transmitted by a Predator drone hovering above the hospital. Franks didn't stay up to watch. He went to bed.



Rumsfeld, like Schwarzkopf, is a strong presence. Partly for that reason, the media have given him the bulk of the credit for transforming the American military from a grinding, troop-heavy force into the modern, high-tech powerhouse that sprinted to victory in Iraq. Rumsfeld deserves enormous credit. But Franks was the indispensable man.

Rumsfeld and Franks are opposites. Both have impressive leadership skills, but the defense secretary is outspoken and passionate, Franks terse and unflappable. They did not always get along swimmingly. During the Afghan war, Centcom lawyers dithered over whether a caravan carrying Mullah Omar, the Taliban chieftan, was a legitimate target. By the time they decided it was, it was too late. Mullah Omar got away. Rumsfeld threw a fit, and Franks felt the brunt of it.

A Bush administration official said Franks is "easy to underestimate," and Rumsfeld initially seemed to do just that. He treated Franks like the rest of the military brass. He was brusque and demanding. With Franks, it didn't work. Soon, however, Rumsfeld and his aides concluded Franks was a valuable ally, a bit thin-skinned maybe, but smart and shrewd and able to provide quick answers to virtually any question the defense secretary might have.

On September 12, 2001, the day after the assault on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Rumsfeld asked Franks for a plan to attack al Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan. A week later Franks presented one. "We showed him a concept with special operations forces working with locals, tied into CIA operations and supported by airpower," Franks said. Rumsfeld's reaction: "That looks pretty good." A few weeks into the war, there was pressure on Franks to jettison the plan and deploy more ground troops. He rejected the idea. It turned out to be the right decision. The troops weren't needed.

Afghanistan was a laboratory for military transformation. Lessons from Afghanistan were applied on a broader scale in Iraq. "We learned precision [bombing] is good and it makes the difference," Franks said. "We learned small units on the ground leveraging airpower are powerful. We learned the linkage of [CIA] operations with military operations is very powerful for both intelligence and operational purposes."

When Franks sat down with Bush in Crawford, the ostensible purpose of the meeting was to update the president on the Afghan war. But the discussion shifted quickly to Iraq. Franks showed Bush the Pentagon's off-the-shelf plan for conquering Iraq and deposing Saddam. It was Desert Storm Plus: 500,000 or more troops and weeks of airstrikes preceding ground operations. "This is not what we are going to do," Franks told the president. Rather, he'd come back with a pared-down, swifter, riskier war plan.

The two plans—the standby plan and the smaller option—were the "bookends" for a year-long struggle at Centcom headquarters and the Pentagon over a new strategy for Iraq, a struggle that occasionally pitted Franks against Rumsfeld, and branches of the armed forces against each other. The new plan, finalized last February, combined five elements of 21st-century warfare that reflect a remade military.

Speed. Franks is fond of saying, "Speed kills." His

Illustration by Dan Adel

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orders to commanders of American forces invading Iraq from the south were to race to Baghdad. "Be audacious and do not get bogged down with any major Iraqi force," Franks told them. "Bypass that force and move as quickly as possible to Baghdad." Critics of this strategy, Franks said, "didn't have the situational awareness I had."

Franks knew Iraqi divisions on the right flank couldn't get near the speeding Americans. Special ops forces had blown up bridges the Iraqis would have needed to cross to get at the Americans. So the Iraqi divisions sat in place "until they were decimated" by American airpower. "I never saw this operation as anything approaching a gamble," Franks said.

Speed raises "the possibility of catastrophic success," said Marine General Peter Pace, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which is roughly what Franks achieved. A small force moving rapidly can have the same impact—the same firepower—as a large force advancing slowly. And the smaller force has a striking advantage. It can gain a quicker victory with fewer troops and fewer casualties by surprising and discombobulating the enemy. Or, to use another of Franks's favorite phrases, by "getting into the threat's decision cycle."

According to Pace, "you still have overwhelming force, but your overwhelming force is a combination of agility and size as opposed to simply mass humanity." This amounts to a new definition of overwhelming force, a concept touted by Colin Powell when he was Joint Chiefs chairman during the Gulf War. Then, it meant outnumbering the enemy or at least coming close to matching the enemy's troop strength. In the new warfare, it means applying the same or more firepower with fewer troops, equipped with cutting edge technology and augmented by airpower.

Precision. This is the ability to destroy what you want and nothing else. Precision, Pace said, allows "you to destroy military targets and not destroy civilian targets." In Baghdad, only military facilities were targeted. One result: Most civilians didn't flee the city. "The whole refugee problem was averted, in large measure because we were very precise in the way we did our business," Pace said.

Improved technology has made weapons far more precise than they were in the Gulf War. "At least two-thirds of the bombs used by coalition forces in Iraq were precision-guided by lasers of global-positioning satellites, compared with just 13 percent of the bombs we used in the 1991 Gulf War," President Bush has noted proudly. Not the least of the accomplishments of precision weapons was the shredding of Republican Guard divisions outside Baghdad. They were "depleted" before confronting allied divisions. When American troops advanced, they found "hundreds of destroyed vehicles" and minimal resistance, said Air Force Major Gen. Victor Renuart, the Centcom operations chief.

Precision also magnifies the value of airpower. Targets that once took many sorties to destroy can now be wiped out by a single precision-guided bomb. The change in ratios is amazing. In World War II, it took 3,000 sorties to guarantee the destruction of a target. By the Gulf War, that was reduced to 10. Now one plane can take out 10 targets.

Vision. The military calls it situational or battlefield awareness. With new technology, commanders can see, in real time, where the enemy is and where their own forces are as well. Drones, radar planes, and the like spied constantly from the air on Iraqi forces. Transponders with each American unit beeped their location. With this technology, "I am watching the transformation of warfare," said Franks.

At the Centcom command post in Doha, Qatar, none of the technology was older than six months. A flat blue panel showed exactly where each allied unit was. At one point, Franks picked out a unit on the panel and simultaneously watched a second panel with a live report from a journalist embedded in that unit. "It occurred to me I was watching transformation in more than one way," Franks said.

Here's how Pace describes the American advantage in situational awareness: "The combination of overhead cover and unmanned aerial vehicles and manned aircraft and special operations and the true integration of CIA assets with special operations folks really gave a clearer picture of the battlefield itself."

Jointness. This is an awkward word for the integration in battle of the four branches of the armed services. A goal for decades, it was achieved for the first time in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the Gulf War, the forces of each branch were "de-conflicted"—in other words, they operated on separate tracks. "This time," Franks said, "we had reliant operations, where one service is reliant on the performance of another service. I believe that is transformational." Jointness is designed to produce synergy. "By taking the strengths of each of the services and integrating these capabilities," said Renuart, you can produce an even greater effect "at a center point on the battlefield."

Troops dashing to Baghdad relied on airpower for protection. And by drawing Republican Guard divisions into the open, they created a target-rich environment for American warplanes. Army, special ops, and CIA agents worked together in northern Iraq to push the Kurds out front as a fighting force, just as they had done in Afghanistan with the Northern Alliance.

In the past, each branch sought to expand its own role, the Army arguing for more of its troops on the ground,

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and so on. Franks, an Army man, opposed that traditional practice as he wrote the war plan. "He was obsessed with not letting the Army be elevated," an aide said. It wasn't, causing heartburn among Army generals, but creating a more coherent force in Iraq.

Special operations. This is a Rumsfeld obsession, and rightly so. For decades, special operations forces were the neglected stepchild of the military. In the Gulf War, Schwarzkopf denigrated special forces as "snake eaters." And in that war, Iraq fired dozens of missiles on Israel from its "Scud zone" in western Iraq. Last March, the special ops forces that slipped into the west at night took out all the Scud sites before a single missile was fired.

In Afghanistan, it took only a few hundred special ops personnel and CIA agents on the ground to rout the Taliban. They leveraged their presence to locate targets for destruction by precision munitions fired by warplanes. In Iraq, an estimated 10,000 special ops troops spread across the country, seizing hundreds of oil wells and the bridges that allied ground troops would cross on the road to Baghdad.

The new warfare wasn't the sole source of the success in Iraq, nor is it the only aspect of transformation. Old concepts carried out more efficiently played a part. One was deception. The Turkish gambit was Franks's boldest effort to deceive Saddam. There's no proof, but the best guess is it affected Saddam's expectations of when an invasion might occur.

Weeks before the war, American military officers learned from their Turkish counterparts that Turkey was unlikely to allow the U.S. 4th Infantry Division to invade Iraq from Turkey in the north. Such an attack was a critical part of the Franks plan. But absent a northern front, Franks wanted Saddam to think an invasion from Turkish soil was still likely and that the war couldn't begin until weeks after the Turkish issue was resolved. So Franks insisted ships with the 4th Infantry's tanks and equipment remain off the shore of Turkey for weeks, as if awaiting the Turkish okay to unload. In fact, disinformation that the Turks would ultimately permit American troops to operate from their soil was slipped to Saddam's inner circle.

If that didn't persuade Saddam that he had, in Franks's words, "more rope," the American commander had another trick. Instead of sending ground troops into Iraq after weeks of bombing, Franks sent the 3rd Infantry Division, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and a British Division across the southern border the day before bombing began. Then, despite talk of a pause before moving on Baghdad, Franks agreed with ground commanders to send tanks and troops into the city immediately on a "thunder run."

Had allied forces encountered serious resistance, Franks had alternatives. Pace refers to them as "preplanned audibles," like the calls a quarterback might make at the line of scrimmage. Had special ops failed in the west, Franks had Plan B, sending a large contingent of forces from Kuwait to attack the Scud sites. Because the Turkish option didn't materialize, Franks turned to a backup plan to combine a small American force with Kurdish fighters. It worked.

A final improvement was in logistics. In the Gulf War, equipment, fuel, and food poured slowly into Kuwait. It took 25 to 30 days for an item, once ordered, to arrive. Now it takes little more than a week. When soldiers in Afghanistan said they needed saddles, they were delivered in four days.

In Iraq, each shipped item had a radio transmitter tag rather than a bar code. It could instantly be determined exactly where the item was and how soon it would arrive. Major General Dennis Jackson, Centcom's logistics boss, is a fan of Jeff Bezos, the Amazon CEO who established a state-of-the-art distribution system. Jackson may have gone Bezos one step better. During the war, he told Franks the military now has the capability to feed its troops in the field forever. Franks, by the way, is a consumer of MREs, the meals ready to eat for troops in the field. Franks eats them on plane trips.

For his war plan to succeed, Franks had to win the confidence of the commander in chief, Bush. Without the president's faith in the plan, it might be jettisoned at the first sign of trouble. Bush had inherited Franks as Centcom commander from the Clinton administration. Though Franks had grown up in Midland, Texas, and had graduated from Midland Lee High School a year ahead of Laura Bush, he didn't meet the president until the spring of 2001. The occasion was a White House gathering of Bush with top military commanders and their wives.

At the time, Bush mentioned he knew of Franks's Midland connection, but he left it at that. Over the next two years, Franks returned to the White House to brief the president on war plans at least a dozen times. The most dramatic meeting was by teleconference several days before the invasion of Iraq.

Bush and Rumsfeld were at the White House, Franks in Saudi Arabia, and his sub-commanders spread from Qatar to Bahrain to Kuwait. Bush addressed the commanders one by one, asking how each felt about the strategy put together by Franks. Each one endorsed it, as Bush already had. And soon enough the war was on. ♦

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Too Much History

George W. Bush faces the challenges of FDR, Truman, and JFK all at once.

By Noemie Emery

All through the Clinton administration and into the 2000 election, some said we had run out of history. It had been tapped out, like an overused resource. It had run dry, like a well. Then came September 11, and history came flooding back with a vengeance, swamping us all in a torrent of crisis and incident. We have so much history now that we have nowhere to put it. We have a history glut. Elected in peace, George W. Bush has become a war president, fighting hot wars and covert wars on terror, while trying to rebuild the Atlantic alliance and bring peace and order to the Middle East. He is making history more than he ever imagined, but he is also reliving it, in an unusual fusion of incidents. We are reliving not one but four past crises. And the years our present situation resembles are these:

1938

In 1938, the League of Nations, having failed to check Japanese aggression in Manchuria in 1931, Italian aggression in Ethiopia in 1935, and German aggression in the Rhineland in 1936, lapsed at last into utter inconsequence when it failed to prevent the partition of Czechoslovakia, a sellout that Britain and France hailed as "peace in our time." Peace in our time lasted just one year, before pumped up German forces rolled into Poland, setting off a world war that raged on five continents, killed 40 million people, and lasted six years. In the end, aggression was rolled back and order restored by a military alliance led by the United States and Great Britain, with Russia acting at times as an out-and-out foe, and at times as a critical ally.

In 2003, the United Nations, having failed to stop numerous incursions and massacres from Bosnia to Rwanda, once more proved its futility when its Security Council split bitterly on the issue of whether or not to enforce its own resolutions against Saddam Hussein. Once again, France helped the aggressor, aided in this instance by Russia and Germany. As the U.N. tossed itself into the dustbin of history, it became clearer and clearer that aggression would be halted and order restored by a military alliance led by the United States and Great Britain (with Russia in an on-and-off supporting role). "History keeps coming back, sometimes like a bad dinner," wrote columnist Paul Greenberg. And so it did, what with hapless attempts to disarm an aggressor, and endless French pleas for more talk. "Among the 18 European countries that now have signed on with America's latest crusade . . . was the Czech Republic," noted Greenberg. "Of course. The Czechs remember. Specifically, they remember being sold out." For the Czechs, the events of the year 1938 led to 50 years of enslavement. For the United States (which was not a member of the League), they led to attack and disaster. Which brings us to year number two.

1941

On December 7, 1941, the American fleet at Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese Empire. U.S. losses were 19 ships sunk, 265 airplanes struck, and 2,403 dead. It was the first attack on U.S. soil since the British burned the White House in 1814. On September 11, 2001, three jetliners hijacked by Islamic terrorists crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in suburban Virginia and killed over 3,000 people. A fourth plane, brought down by a heroic passenger uprising, was headed for either the White House or the Capitol. It was the first attack by a foreign power on the American mainland since the British burned the White House in 1814. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had to rally his countrymen, and prepare a hot war to be fought on five continents, against the armed forces of the three Axis powers. President George W. Bush had to rally the country, and prepare for a hot war to be fought on five continents, against the worldwide terrorist network, as well as its supporters. Roosevelt's enemies were nation-states, with formidable armies and large stores of conventional weapons. Bush's enemy is an all-but-invisible shadowy being, with no land or army, but access to multiple weapons of terror.

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Roosevelt's aim was to liberate territory and force the surrender of enemies. Bush's aim is to surgically extract the terrorists from the nations where they nest, a different and new kind of war. Roosevelt's enemies claimed he had advance knowledge of the strike at Pearl Harbor and allowed it to happen to gratify his desire to make war on Hitler. Bush's enemies claimed he had advance knowledge of the attacks in New York and Virginia, and allowed them to happen to gratify his desire to make war on Saddam. Roosevelt and Bush were both accused of being pushed into war by Jews.

By all accounts, Roosevelt knew from the mid-1930s onward that he would one day have to take up arms against Hitler; and he longed to effect a regime change in Germany. But he was unable to sell his case to his own people, and was forced to wait for a tragic attack. Bush likewise had global support for his retaliatory war on the Taliban, but faced wide resistance outside his own country to a preemptive assault on Iraq. In 2003 as in 1940, preemptive war was a hot issue and a hard sell. Which leads us to year number three.

1962

On October 16, 1962, President John F. Kennedy was given a series of photos proving that the Soviet Union was installing in Cuba 16 ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads to Atlanta, Miami, New Orleans, Houston, Mexico City, and all of Central America as well as Washington, D.C. Cuba had never attacked the United States (rather the opposite), there was no proof that it possessed nuclear weapons, and no direct threat to fire the missiles was ever made. Nonetheless, Kennedy decided that the mere *presence* of such missiles in the hands of a hostile tyrant was so great a threat to the national interest that he was willing to risk war to have them removed.

On September 11, 2001, the damage done to the American nation with weapons no more complex than three planes filled with jet fuel made President George W. Bush see Saddam Hussein's development of weapons of mass destruction in a new and more sinister light. Iraq had never invaded America, and there was no proof that these weapons would ever be turned on American interests. Nonetheless, Bush determined that the mere *presence* of such weapons in the hands of a tyrant with Saddam's record posed such a grave threat to the national interest that he was prepared to risk war to have them destroyed. Kennedy was never willing to accept a solution that left Soviet missiles in Cuba. Bush was never willing to accept a solution that left weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein. Kennedy was prepared either to bomb Cuba or to launch an invasion, but he gave the Soviet Union a chance to back down by first instituting a blockade of the island. Bush was prepared to make war on Iraq, but he gave Saddam a chance to survive by first demanding that Iraq fully disarm. On October 26, 1962, three Russian vessels turned back from Cuba, and the parties were able to reach a peaceful solution. In 2003, neither Saddam nor the U.N. appeared to be serious. And the only course remaining was war.

Bush saw threatening preemptive war as simply his duty as president. So did Kennedy, who told his brother that if he had *not* laid down his ultimatum, he would have been soon, and quite rightly, impeached. Pacifist critics reviled both men as cowboys. But for Kennedy, preemption was a one-time thing, an aberration in the forty-year run of the Cold War, which quickly reverted to its containment modality. For Bush, preemption is becoming a weapon of choice and necessity, an indispensable check on a new world of terror, to be used in self-defense by a new concert of nations. Which leads us to year number four.

1946

In the course of the year 1946, President Harry S. Truman came to understand that the assumptions he'd held about the world when he'd become president one year before no longer applied to the world he was living in, and the alliances inherited from World War II would have to be wholly reconfigured. Between September 11, 2001, and March 2003, George W. Bush came to understand that the assumptions he had held about the world when he'd become president one year before no longer applied to the world he was leading, and that the world order would have to be reconstructed and remade. Truman found that the coalition that had won World War II was no longer stable; that Russia was an enemy and China becoming one; and that the Western nations would have to rebuild their defeated Axis enemies as part of the new non-Communist bloc. Bush came to see that the alliance that had won the Cold War was splintering; that France and Germany were now at odds with the United States and Britain, which went to find allies among their former opponents, the once-captive Communist satellites. Both were surprised by the bad faith of their one-time war partners. Both were accused by their liberal critics of having started the quarrels themselves.

Truman built NATO to do the job that the U.N. could not, of safeguarding the West through collective security. Bush is faced with the job of remaking NATO to counter the new terrorist threat or replacing it. The Truman Doctrine, as it was soon called, "enumerated a heavy precedent for un-thought-out commitments to unassessed regimes in ill-defined places," wrote Derek

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Leebaert in *The Fifty Year Wound*. "Right now, we look back at Communism as centralized and so easy to contain. But that's not how it looked at the time."

Truman and Bush both started from the simple desire to safeguard their country, and gradually moved to the final idea that the only way to fight communism and terror was to end the conditions that made them appealing. Truman understood that his postwar world would have no lasting security unless he turned Japan and Germany into stable democracies. Bush understands that his world can have no real security without bringing reform and order to the terror-spawning Middle East. The hardest job of the 20th century went to Franklin D. Roosevelt, but the toughest decisions belonged to Harry S. Truman, who had to name, frame, and contain a wholly new form of trouble. Truman's problems, along with those of FDR and John Kennedy, now have all come to President Bush.

Some liberal critics will maintain to this day that it was Harry S. Truman who started the Cold War, with his belligerence toward the peaceable Soviet Union. The same types will tell you today, with the same straight faces, that the trainwreck in the United Nations and the deepening split in the Atlantic alliance are due to George Bush and his errors and arrogance. What others will say, with somewhat more reason, is that it would have been easier to get Stalin to agree to his own containment than to have gotten France to agree to any measure whatever penalizing Iraq. France sold Iraq the nuclear reactor that Israel had the good sense to take out in 1981. France spent the decade of the '90s helping Iraq evade U.N. rules.

Along with this de facto Iraqi alliance went another French subplot: to lead a coalition of the resentful in an effort to thwart the United States. The goal was to lead a unified Europe in the project of checking American power. In the event, it split Europe in half, breaking off its friends (Belgium, Germany, and Russia) from a larger pro-U.S. bloc. To Truman, the division of Europe was the cause of the Cold War, and its reason for being. To Bush, the more complex split within Europe is peripheral to the war on terror, but it is a distraction and a huge complication in the effort to place the war on terror in a multinational frame. Roosevelt conducted his hot war within a mostly stable web of alliances. Truman built his new world order after the hot war had ended. Kennedy introduced his preemption idea in the frame of the Cold War, and returned to deterrence once the crisis had passed. Bush has to reframe his alliances in the midst of a hot war, with preemption an ongoing policy. Iraq did not split the Western alliance; it highlighted splits that were already there.

But even if NATO had been staunchly united, Bush would have found his Iraqi incursion a hard act to sell. He was trying to get the world to sign on to a war against a country he believed would attack in the future (though it had issued no direct threat), using weapons of mass destruction he assumed (but could not prove) it had. "The question of whether they had nuclear weapons on the island was irrelevant; Kennedy had to assume that they did," writes Richard Reeves in *Profile of Power*. "He had already decided as soon as Bundy had shown him the photos that the United States had to take the missiles out."

Iraq was believed to be developing sinister weapons; Iraq had invaded two neighboring states. To Bush, the question of whether terrorists already had Iraqi weapons was irrelevant. He had to assume they would get them. And he had to take out, before they were usable, weapons that could do devastating harm to the United States. Not everyone regarded this imperative as self-evident. "By what right have you done this?" Khrushchev railed at Kennedy at the height of the crisis. "You are trampling on the generally accepted rules of law." Sentiments of this sort have been hurled at George W. Bush by dissenters at home, diplomats at the United Nations, French politicians, and demagogues everywhere. Kennedy was spared large public protests because his crisis arose and was settled so quickly, and the only debate was among the president's counselors. Bush endured protests for months.

Prior to 2003, there had been two key Western examples of preemptive action: Israel's strike at Saddam's nuclear reactor, and President Kennedy's blockade of Cuba. Both of these, and Bush's overthrow of Saddam's regime, were undertaken to prevent an attack with megadeath weapons. Disagreements arose when the danger of megadeath weapons plus terrorist methods collided with established tradition about what was just in war. "The law has not yet evolved to cope with the world after September 11," writes Clifford Orwin in Canada's *National Post*. The next job for Bush (when he cleans up his old ones) is to try to make sure that it does.

After this war, Bush should sit down *with his allies* to draw up *together* the rules and restrictions governing acts of preemption. A good place to start would be the suggestions laid down in the April 13 *Washington Post* by Anne-Marie Slaughter, president of the American Society of International Law. Under her rules, the presence of three conditions in a state or nation could justify preemptive use of force: "(1) possession of weapons of mass destruction or clear and convincing evidence of

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attempts to gain such weapons; (2) grave and systemic human rights abuses sufficient to demonstrate the absence of any internal constraints on government behavior; and (3) evidence of aggressive intent with regard to other nations." This, as she says, "sets a very high threshold," while recognizing unacceptable levels of risk.

Bush should adopt this standard and make it the basis of his policy. He should explain yet again why preemptive acts are now needed, pledge that they will be undertaken neither often nor lightly, and that most threats can be resolved short of the use of force. He can note that neither Kennedy nor the Israelis followed their acts of preemption with more, and that both made the world safer. He can note that this latest Iraq war may make other wars less likely by deterring provocative acts. One of the chores Bush didn't know he'd signed up for in becoming president is redesigning the codes of international law to make room for certain acts of preventive deterrence. It's a strange assignment for a frat boy from Texas, but then who could know?

And who could know, too, that this one-term-plus governor would be the man charged with remaking the Western alliance for the needs of the post-postwar world? Bush and Tony Blair, when they get to it, will face the task of constructing multinational arrangements—whose shape is not yet wholly clear—to police the world's rogue states and their caches of weapons for perhaps the next 50 years. At the core of this effort will be the new Gulf War coalition, with the United States and Great Britain as enforcers.

Even before France blew up the U.N., it was clear that organizations built to cut off the next Hitler or Stalin couldn't cope with Saddam and Osama.

Bush and Blair will be taking apart and remaking the world put together by Truman and Churchill, reconfiguring it to meet different threats, from different parts of the world. They will be facing a world in which the challenges arise not from mighty coalitions but from shadowy networks, not from superpowers but from failed states and rogue states, not just from weapons delivered by missiles and bombers, but also from bombs placed in knapsacks, germs placed in envelopes, and canisters filled with deadly chemical agents. They will be facing infiltration through airports, not cross-border invasions; suicide bombers, not tank battalions; not just dictators with large ambitions, but madmen with nothing to lose.

These are new times that require new tactics and agencies. Even before France blew up the U.N. (and perhaps did NATO some serious damage), it was becoming evident that organizations built to cut off the next Hitler or Stalin need changes to cope with Saddam and Osama bin Laden. "Instead of seeking to restore the status quo, we should reinvent it," urges Anne-Marie Slaughter. Necessity will foster its own new inventions, as it did almost 60 years ago, this time without a French veto.

Let us not play up the strains of the present by running down those of the past. No president had a worse job than Franklin Roosevelt, a worse week than John Kennedy, a worse set of choices than Harry S. Truman, so many of which could have gone wrong. But no president other than Bush ever faced so many conflicting cross-pressures and strains. FDR joined a coalition when Pearl Harbor was bombed; he did not have to create one. Truman faced his worst moments only after containment and NATO were safely in place. Kennedy had no hostile Hans Blix to contend with, and the weapons he confronted were large enough to be photographed, and too large to be easily hidden or carted away.

In the course of this past year, President Bush and his people made two major errors, each in the context of foreign relationships. They failed to sense the depth and the breadth of the French disaffection. And they failed to sense the wide-ranging panic the idea of preemption would arouse. Critics have said they were too dense and too insular to register these shadings of foreign opinion. More likely they were simply too busy to pick up every nuance in the swirl of events. Let us recall that Truman had time to sell his containment doctrine to an unhappy world before his trial by fire: It was more than two years from Churchill's Iron Curtain speech in Fulton, Missouri, to the Soviet blockade of Berlin and the American airlift; and another two years from that to the war in Korea. Let us recall, too, that Franklin D. Roosevelt—the greatest political talent of the 20th century, a tested leader elected four times, a man richly gifted in guile and eloquence—could not coax his country into war to save itself and Great Britain until it had been savagely assaulted at home.

Sworn in as president in early 2001, Bush took office believing that "in time of peace the stakes . . . appear small." He pledged to "do small things with great love." Instead, history gave him high stakes and great pressures. How little he knew. ♦

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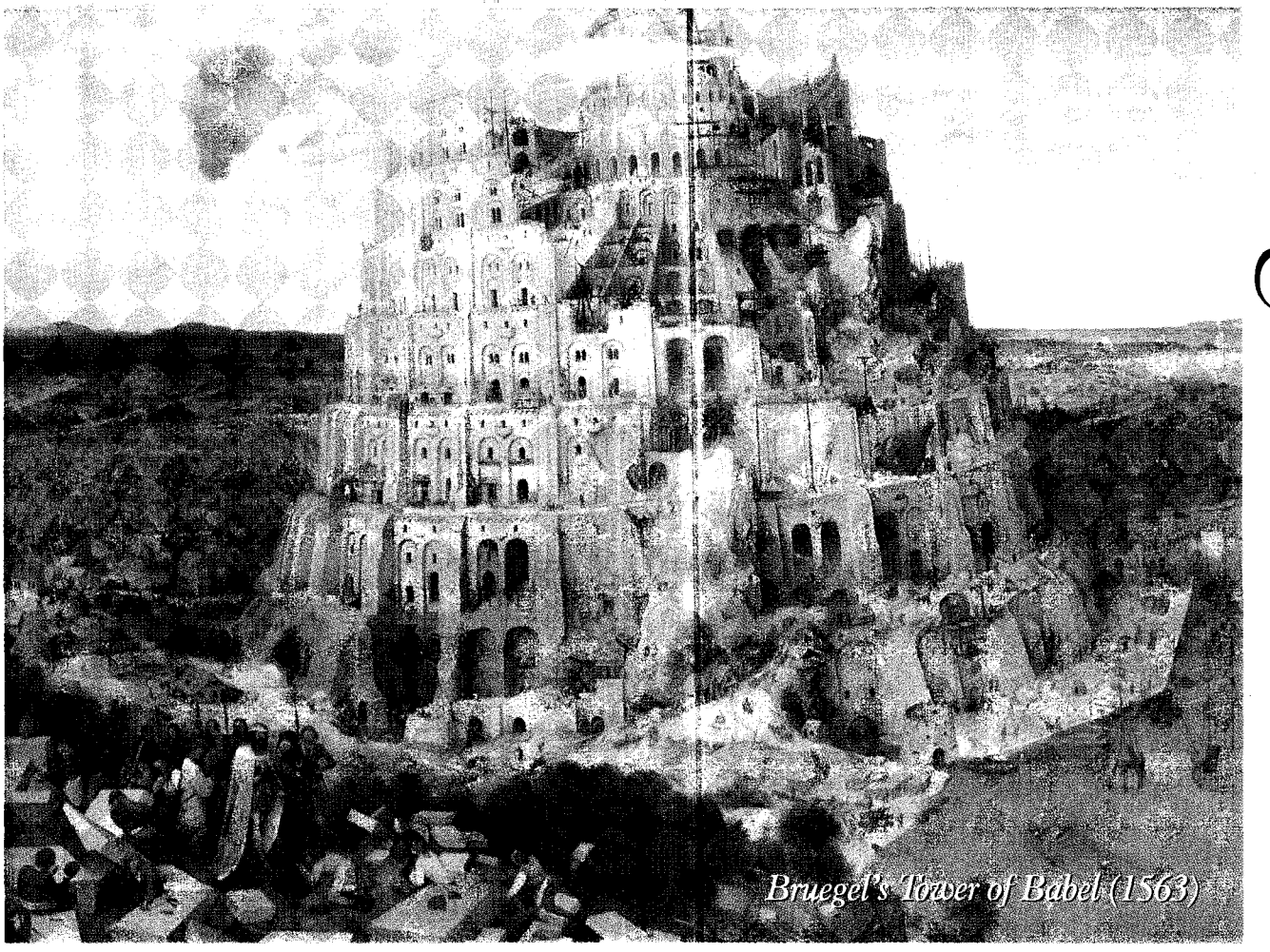

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Bruegel's Tower of Babel (1563)

In the Beginning . . .

Leon Kass's Genesis By Gary A. Anderson

Brevard Childs, a professor of biblical studies at Yale, used to tell his students that what they needed to read the Bible more intelligently was to become deeper people.

This bit of wisdom—that reading and character are intimately related—seems to have mostly slipped away from us in American culture. And its loss can be measured by the shock we experience when we encounter a book like Leon Kass's exploration of the Book of Genesis, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, which assumes and depends upon both the high moral importance of the Bible's text and the high moral demand placed upon the Bible's readers.

Gary A. Anderson is professor of Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School.

Kass is best known these days as chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, and America's recent battles over cloning and stem-cell research offer obvious and appropriate occasions for the application of his penetrating philosophical mind and finely tuned moral compass to the pressing issues of the day.

The Beginning of Wisdom
Reading Genesis
by Leon R. Kass
Free Press, 720 pp., $35

There's some parallel to this in the purposes he intends with *The Beginning of Wisdom*. As Kass states in his introduction, the title he originally proposed for the book was "The Education of the Fathers," for the bulk of his narrative concerns how the colorful stories about the patriarchs and matriarchs of ancient Israel can serve us today as teachings about the good life.

But to seek only contemporary advice in *The Beginning of Wisdom*—as though Kass were writing the upper-brow equivalent of "Management Secrets of the Bible for Today's CEOs"—is to mischaracterize the book radically. Kass has spent some twenty years reading the terse and enigmatic text of Genesis. (St. Augustine once said the best rule for understanding the Bible was to read it over and over again.) And all this hard labor has born fruit as Kass discovers, in biblical detail after biblical detail, themes of universal moral and philosophical importance.

And yet, Kass's effort frees us to ask whether the Book of Genesis is funda-

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Abraham's Sacrifice *by Andrea del Sarto (1506).*

mentally about such universal moral and philosophical themes. That it contains these themes, and that Kass has found them, seems beyond doubt. He is a brilliant explicator of texts, an intellect of high moral seriousness, and a profound philosophical examiner of human life. But where in universal philosophy can we look to find one of the most important features of Genesis: the theological character of Israel's identity as the chosen people of God?

The Book of Genesis divides neatly into two halves. The first, the primeval history, stretches across the first eleven chapters and tells the story of creation, the garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the flood, and concludes with the Tower of Babel. This portion of the story ends with humankind in complete disarray: Divided by language, each incipient nation is sent from Babel to establish its own culture. In contrast to every other ancient account of mankind's origins, the Bible chooses not to locate its own national perspective in the story. Whereas, say, the ancient Babylonian account of creation builds toward and concludes with the erection of the city of Babylon and its central cult site, no trace of such national chauvinism can be found in Israel's tale. The claim to land and law, which are central to the remainder of the Torah, are passed over in silence. The atmosphere of these first eleven chapters is breathtakingly universal.

Equally shocking, Kass observes, is the way in which the discovery of human culture is recounted. Unlike Mesopotamian creation accounts, the emergence of the various arts (metallurgy, music, agriculture, and midwifery) is not the result of some divine benefaction. They are tainted upon arrival, for they originate as human inventions. To make matters even worse, it is the descendants of Cain, the world's first murderer, who found the first city and put in motion the march toward progress.

Here *The Beginning of Wisdom* is truly in its element. Kass is awestruck by the Bible's unique approach to this subject and draws the proper conclusion: In the biblical worldview, the emergence of civilized life is set under a pall of suspicion. While Aristotle praised the city as "the first truly self-sufficient community," the Bible, Kass concludes, considers deeply troublesome our aspirations to self-sufficiency.

This is right, of course, but not complete. Kass's choice to limit his focus to Genesis leads him to overstate his case. Human accomplishments are not wrong *per se*; everything depends on *how* such accomplishments are grounded. Though the first city was founded on bloodshed, Jerusalem was not, and the forty-eighth psalm's command to "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof" is hardly anti-urban. The sole guarantor of a flourishing city is the acknowledgment of her true Founder. At the end of time, as Isaiah puts it, "all nations shall flow unto" the holy city, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

But Kass's insight that the *beginnings* of civilization are cast in an aberrant mold is certainly on target. Indeed, the problems with emerging civilization become even more pointed in the story of the Tower of Babel. Here we see all of humanity gathered together as a single entity endeavoring to build an enormous city whose towers will scrape the heavens. "Like so much of modern technology," Kass observes, "the means precede and generate their own ends: 'Now we have bricks. What can we make with them?'"

The danger that the story of Babel alerts us to, Kass believes, is *where* human achievement will lead when it lacks any mechanism for self-correction. Kass's keen philosophical eye gets straight to the heart of the matter: "The much-prized fact of unity, embodied especially in a unique but created 'truth' believed by all, precludes the possibility of discovering that one might be in error. The one uncontested way does not even admit of the distinction between truth and error. Self-examination, no less than self-criticism, would be impossible; there could be no Socrates who knew that he did not know."

So, what is the solution that Kass perceives Genesis to offer? First, the possibility of committing similar errors in the future must be eliminated. The tower-builders must be dispersed and their languages multiplied. Only the "creation of divergent customs and competing interests can challenge the view of human self-sufficiency. Each nation, by its very existence, testifies against the godlike status of every other; the rivalries that spring up are, in part, both the result and the cause of the affronts to national self-esteem that such otherness necessarily implies." Unrivaled claims to truth can be terribly dangerous, especially when wedded to unrivaled power. In order to whittle these pretensions down to size,

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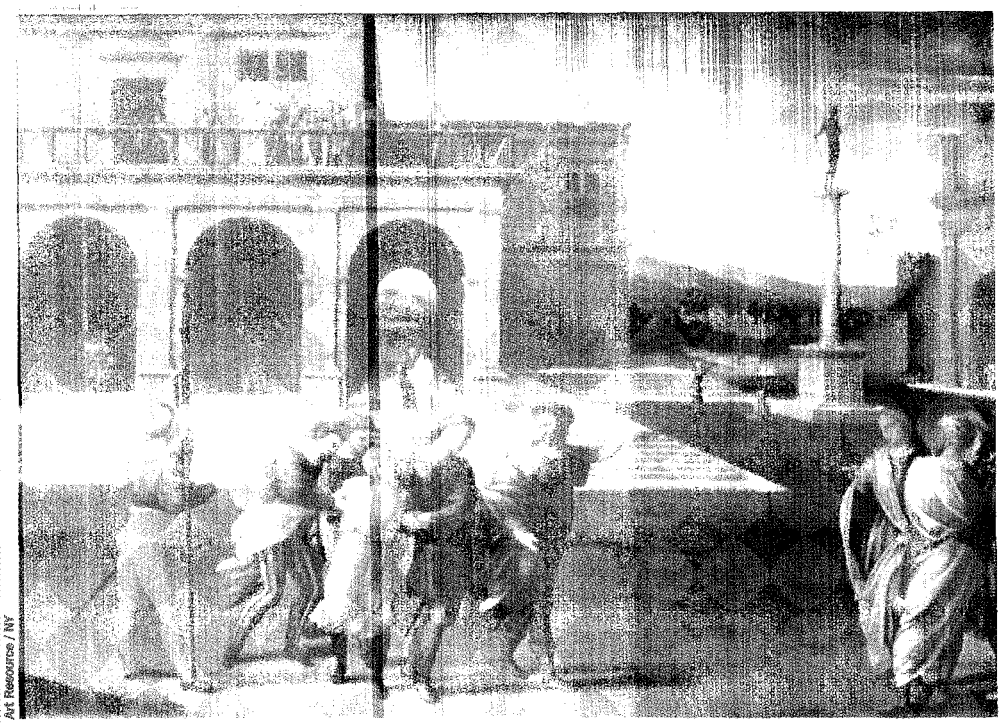
this monopoly of power must be broken up. God's tactic is to divide mankind into rival nations and disperse them across the face of the globe. The will to power is not eliminated thereby—but the absolute monopoly over power is.

With these preliminaries in place, the second part of God's solution can emerge upon the stage of human history. The second half of Genesis picks up at chapter twelve and tells the story of God's mysterious designs for Abraham and his offspring and how they, in turn, respond to His call. Out of the many post-Babel nations God will choose one through whom He will set the world straight.

Thus, at the beginning of chapter twelve, without any proper introduction, are the words that are as surprising to us as they were to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great." The way to make one's name great will not be by prideful acts of self-betterment. God promises Abraham a great name solely on the condition of obedience, and obedience that will cost Abraham potentially everything, even his long-awaited son.

Everywhere he looks, Kass sees today the decline of Abraham's way and the rising again of the Tower of Babel. "Whether we think of the heavenly city of the *philosophes*, or the posthistorical age toward which Marxism points, or, more concretely, the imposing building of the United Nations that stands today in America's first city; whether we look at the World Wide Web . . . or the biomedical project to re-create human nature without its imperfection; whether we confront the spread of the postmodern claim that all truth is of human creation—we see everywhere evidence of the revived Babylonian vision."

Will this new Babel succeed? Can it escape the failings of its biblical predecessor? These are among the most pressing of questions that face us today. Kass's character proves worthy to the text he interprets: "Anyone who reads



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[illegible] taken [illegible] by [illegible] [illegible]nacci (c. 1520).

the newspapers has grave reasons for doubt. The city is back, and so, too, is Sodom, babbling and dissipating away. Perhaps we ought to see the dream of Babel today, once again, from God's point of view. Perhaps we should pay attention to the plan He adopted as the alternative to Babel."

As a reading and application of the primeval history of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, this is compelling. But Kass's account of the patriarchs in the second half of Genesis seems less helpful. And the reasons boil down to the intellectual character of Kass and the sort of character he thinks he discovers in Abraham and his lineage. In the very first pages of the book, Kass declares that he will read Genesis just as he reads Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. This "Great Books" approach seeks a universal form of wisdom in contrast to the more parochial concerns of religiously committed readers. However laudatory religious readings may be, their approach to the Bible "places certain obstacles in the way of a disinterested and philosophic pursuit of truth."

This is an unfortunate contrast. The theological concept of election is manifestly present in Genesis, and election is a stumbling block to any philosophical reading of the text. What philosopher can accept the privilege Israel holds on truth? To his credit, Kass knows the dilemma he is in. When commenting on how the choice of Abraham constitutes the Bible's way of rectifying the sin of Babel, Kass raises the pertinent question: Why him? On this matter, Kass honestly confesses, the text is shockingly silent.

Over the centuries, other biblical commentators, both Christian and Jewish, have also been embarrassed by this silence and rushed in to fill the textual gap with a moral theory that could account for it. Certain commentators imagined, for instance, that Abraham was singled out as a result of his daring discovery of monotheism and his willingness to suffer for it. Kass concedes that the Bible offers no support for this notion, but he himself inclines toward it nonetheless. Abraham, he remarks, "may have figured out that there must be a single, invisible, and intelligent source behind the many silent and dumb heavenly bodies, that the truth is not one city with many gods, but many cities in search of the one God." Here the text's simple sense bows to the midrashic designs of the philosopher.

Once we see the pattern of election in the second half of Genesis, we can look back to see it foreshadowed in the first half. Faced with the disturbing fact that God offers no rationale for the preference of the sacrifice of Abel (the second son of Adam and Eve) over that of Cain (the first son), Kass considers—only to reject—the possibility that what

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is at stake is God's mysterious electing hand that *consistently* prefers the later born over the first born (at least in Genesis: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over his brothers, Ephraim over Manasseh, and even Rachel over Leah). An appeal to election "does not sit well with the philosophical reader," Kass confesses, "for it looks rather like arbitrariness."

Such a confession must give pause to readers of *The Beginning of Wisdom*. The stories of the patriarchs are really accounts, in veiled form, of the people Israel, who are favored by God for no apparent philosophical reason. The rabbinical epigram at the front of Michael Wyschogrod's recent book on the doctrine of election puts it well: "Even though the Jews are unclean, the Divine Presence is among them." Election does not turn on moral worth; the explanation of God's love for Israel lies on the other side of eternity.

For Kass, one of the major lessons to be learned from these stories is how to run a family. Though numerous insights follow from this approach, the overall effect is a subtle but marked distortion. The dilemmas that the patriarchs experience as families are not generic and universal; they are unique to the theological fabric of Genesis. Biblical law itself (in Deuteronomy 21:17) outlaws the favoritism for the later-born that Genesis shows, and what defines the family in the Book of Genesis is quite different from what defines the family in the Book of Kings. What explanation can there be for why the stories of Genesis consistently move in a direction contrary to the Bible's own legal dictates? Only one: to illustrate the radical and unpredictable nature of God's preference for this special people.

The weakest part of *The Beginning of Wisdom* is the treatment of the Joseph story. This moving tale centers on the election of a later son, Joseph, over his brothers and the jealousy that results. The power of the story resides in how Joseph and his brothers grow to see the deeper providential design of what initially appeared to be merely an irrational preference. "The story of Joseph," as Jon Levenson puts it, "is the most sustained and the most profound exploration in the Hebrew Bible of the problematics of chosenness. Human nature, the story makes clear, is not constituted so as to facilitate the acceptance of chosenness. The one chosen is sorely tempted to interpret his special status as a mandate for domination."

Unwilling to see the way chosenness shapes the narrative, Kass offers the unusual interpretation of Joseph as a thoroughly hubristic man whose place in the narrative is to provide a moral object lesson to the reader. A prime piece of evidence for him is the fact that Joseph does not reveal himself to his brothers when they first come down into Egypt to buy grain. For sometime thereafter Joseph plays a charade that causes the greatest of pain to his doting father—because, Kass suggests, Joseph has left the moral constraints of his covenantal heritage and assimilated into the ways of Egypt.

Surely this is wrong. Uriel Simon has a much better grasp on the matter when he accounts for Joseph's failure to identify himself: "Had knowledge reached Jacob, even of the briefest most anonymous form—that Joseph was not mauled by animals but sold into slavery—it would have been extremely difficult to maintain the awful secret of the brothers' role in the affair. Had the matter become known to Jacob, his joy over the survival of the 'son of his old age' would have been voided by the unending sorrow over what the ten brothers had done to this very son. And they, for their part, would never have been able to look him in the eye again." In short, Joseph remains silent because he learns that his own election does not constitute "a mandate for domination." Rather, Joseph's election, like the election of Israel itself, is designed to serve the larger common good: Those who are chosen are chosen to serve. This is a painful lesson that Joseph and his brothers must learn over the course of the last third of the Book of Genesis. A strict adherence to the philosophical mindset forces a biblical interpreter to run roughshod over the particularistic, Israel-centric concerns of Genesis.

Only a book as good as *The Beginning of Wisdom* deserves arguing with in this way. Kass's long and detailed

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A window depicting Noah looking out from the ark, in Chartres Cathedral.

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text considers nearly every scene in the Book of Genesis, and some of its brilliant readings will stay with the reader forever, particularly the discussion of Abraham's quarrel with God, the binding of Isaac, and the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau. My copy is already dog-eared and annotated—primarily because, even when he seems wrong, Leon Kass assumes the high moral importance of the Bible and the high moral demand placed upon its readers. What else do we have today that knows as clearly as *The Beginning of Wisdom* that reading and character are intimately related? ♦

Arabian Night

Can the Saudi kingdom extricate itself from terror? **BY TOM DONNELLY**

Al Qaeda's May 12 bombing in Riyadh is a wake-up call for the Saudi Arabian royal family, President Bush declared. A White House spokesman added that the terrorist attack "makes it clear" the Saudis need to do more to fight terrorism. In response, the Saudis pledged they will do better—for now both Saudis and Americans are in the crosshairs. Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal explained that al Qaeda made a bad tactical error by angering and uniting Saudi Arabia "in resisting and confronting the work they are doing."

Hatred's Kingdom
How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism
by Dore Gold
Regnery, 309 pp., $27.95

All of this talk out of Washington and Riyadh is carefully couched within what both sides call the "longtime strategic partnership" between Saudi Arabia and the United States (just as it was after the 1995 bombing of the American military mission in Riyadh and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing). It is far from clear, however, that the problems of that partnership are amenable to tactical adjustments. To read Dore Gold's *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* is to see the unfortunate fact that al Qaeda-like fundamentalism is central to the Saudi social and political regime.

Tom Donnelly is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Gold traces what he describes as the "Saudi-Wahhabi Covenant," the bargain between the House of Saud and the sect that traces its origins to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab and his movement in the eastern Arabian peninsula at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Wahhabism emerged as an attempt to recover the severest form of Islam and politicize it. Ibn Abd al-Wahhab reacted strongly to a variety of religious and political currents of his time: the decadence of the Ottoman Empire (and perhaps also the rising power of European Christendom), the traditional polytheism of Bedouin tribesmen, the Shia strain of Islam.

Not surprisingly, his puritanism put him at odds with the local clerical hierarchy and the Ottomans. But the clarity of ibn Abd al-Wahhab's religious vision was matched by an eye for political opportunity. He found shelter, patronage, and a partnership with a young prince named Muhammad ibn Saud. The alliance of 1744 was consecrated by a *mithaq*, or covenant, under which ibn Saud formed the first Saudi state, and Wahhabism became its ideology. "It was, in short," Gold writes, "a political bargain: Ibn Saud would protect ibn Abd al-Wahhab and spread his new creed, while ibn Abd al-Wahhab would legitimize Saudi rule over an expanding circle of Bedouin tribes, which were subdued through a new jihad."

Thus, Saudi political rule has always been inseparable from Wahhabism. Over time, the clerics provided the ideological glue that sustained the Saudis through attacks from the Ottomans (who could not ignore the rivalry for suzerainty over Mecca and Medina and the threat to their legitimacy as Muslim rulers), from the Hashemites, and from the West. After World War I, as ibn Saud struggled to create the modern Saudi state, he first employed the Wahhabi *Ikhwan*—the militarized "brotherhood" that eventually became the Saudi Arabian National Guard—to overthrow the Hashemites. But the clever ibn Saud understood that he needed a base for broader rule, especially in the largely Shia eastern provinces.

The need for internal balance and stability was greatly magnified by the prospect of oil wealth. In turn, the oil revenues were key to ibn Saud and his successors. Subsidies—and bribes to individuals—helped ameliorate the divisions within Saudi society. The bargain between the royals and the Wahabbis has been extended by focusing fundamentalist zeal outward, through the Islamic world and indeed globally. This also allowed the Saudis to compete for leadership within the Arab world. Indeed, the formula of radicalism fueled by oil money has proved more durable than the secular pan-Arab nationalism of Nassar or the Baath parties.

Dore Gold, a longtime associate of former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has faced charges that his account of Saudi Arabia is sensationalist and extreme. Other than its title and some of its chapter headings, however, Gold's *Hatred's Kingdom* is relatively free of rhetorical excess, and the book's review of the history of Saudi Wahhabism gives the reader a sense of where Saudi-American relations are bound to go.

He may err on the side of optimism when he says that the Saudi regime can change in response to external pressure. Nonetheless, *Hatred's Kingdom* provides a comprehensive answer for anyone with the question: "Why do some Saudis, at least, hate us?" ♦

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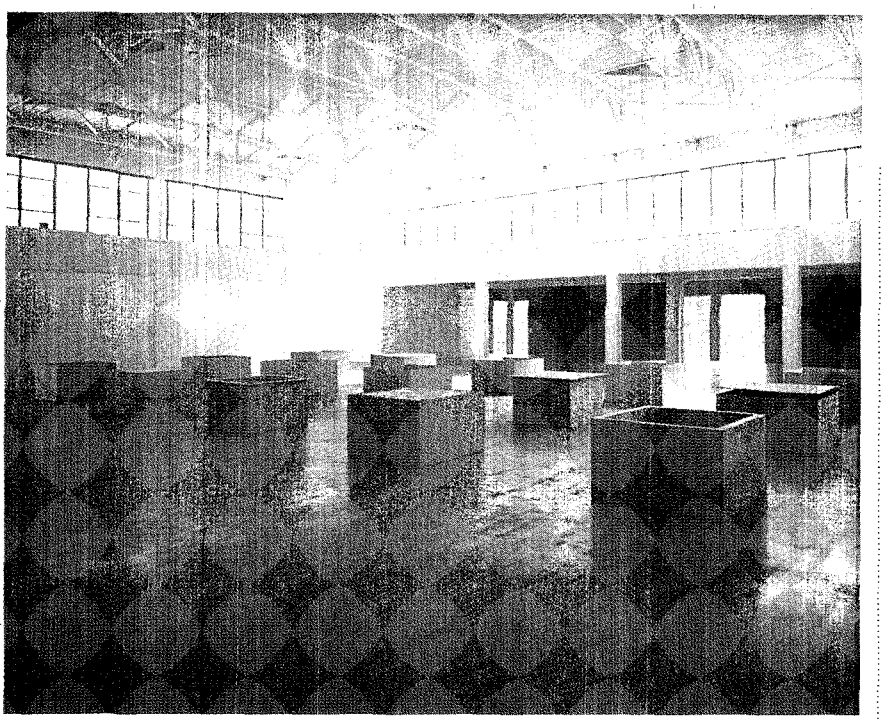

Donald Judd, untitled installation at the Dia:Beacon museum.

Collecting the Uncollectable

A depressing trip to the new Dia:Beacon museum and other sites of art. BY THOMAS M. DISCH

On the cover of the April 6 *New York Times*'s Sunday magazine, the paper's chief art critic, Michael Kimmelman, declared, "The most influential American artists weren't Pollock or de Kooning. They were the ones who came next—Minimalists, Conceptualists, Earth artists—who redefined what art was and who are now, finally, celebrated in a spectacular new museum." In the April 23 issue, the *Times* similarly ballyhooed the opening of the Dia Art Foundation's huge exhibition space in Beacon, New York, trying to make a decommissioned Nabisco cardboard-box factory from the 1920s sound like America's answer to Chartres cathedral: a daytrip for the thoroughly up-to-date.

In fact, Dia:Beacon is as much an orphanage as a museum, since its purpose is to exhibit works that would otherwise be packed away unwitnessed, usually by virtue of their immense size. Anyone who had ever walked past, or around, the very magnum opuses of Donald Judd, Richard Serra, or Michael Heizer will realize that such works pose a special problem for museums. They hog all the space and do not invite the kind of energetic attention solicited by less titanic and merely human artists.

There are, of course, conceptual and earth artists whose works even Dia:Beacon's quarter-million square feet can't accommodate—bulldozer-built works on the scale of mid-sized pyramids, such as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* in Utah (which the Dia Foundation owns) or Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field* in New Mexico (financed by Dia). One must admire the sheer chutzpah of such undertakings, even if one is not tempted to adventure so far afield in order to gawk or to shrug. No doubt many citizens of the Seventh Dynasty reacted similarly to their pharaohs' wonders.

It is essential to such undertakings that there be a corps of high priests and soothsayers to maintain the tone of reverence. The artists themselves are too often flippant and flipped out (Andy Warhol) or belligerent (Richard Serra, in addressing challenges to his *Tilted Arc* when it was removed from Manhattan's Federal Plaza). The owners and galleries have too obvious a vested interest to be credible. It is up to museum curators and to critics like the *Times*'s Kimmelman to strike the right note of hectoring sanctimony.

Perhaps nothing so well conveys the religious and doctrinal dimensions of the Dia Foundation as the testimony of its chairman, Leonard Riggio (also chairman of Barnes & Noble), on the subject of Michael Heizer's *City*, an immense circle of slagheap surrounding an empty courtyard. The construction provoked Riggio to road-to-Damascus raptures: It "represents humanity's highest aspirations. . . . One man building his own equivalent of the pyramids. It's incredibly beautiful. After all, what is art? That's the big question."

This question is expanded to encompass the works of all Dia's featured artists in Kimmelman's catch-all encomium in the *Times*: "They are men mostly, with big egos and big ideas. . . . The work these artists made changed, or at least questioned, the nature of art. . . . The artists even challenged whether art needed to be a tangible object. Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Earth art, video art, Conceptualism—suddenly art could be nothing more than an idea, a piece of paper that played in your head."

This is welcome news, since it relieves art lovers of the onus of actually making the trek to witness art *in situ*. It is enough to think about it at a distance or, at the furthest stretch, to see the virtual shape of it at Dia's website or in the newspapers' art pages. The *Times*'s April 23 story included a photograph of a great "grid of flowering trees" laid out by Robert Irwin, all gray and leafless and as little inviting as any municipal dump, which we can take as a token for the whole Dia experience. But if more is wanted, check out the picture of Donald Judd's vast facility filled with big plywood boxes, bathed in the pure light of day—because the museum mostly eschews the artifice of electric lighting.

Thomas M. Disch is a poet, novelist, and art critic.

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There is also no central heating, so be sure to make your conceptual trip in the summertime. The curators say there will eventually be restaurants and even luxury hotels, but these are still in the development stage, along with the entire exurban housing boom that far-seeing developers and real-estate investors figure is certain to follow the opening of the Dia pleasure dome. Why is it that the whole Dia undertaking feels like the aesthetic equivalent of the tulip mania of seventeenth-century Holland?

Meanwhile in Manhattan, for the price of admission to the Guggenheim, you can see five movies and a great heap of art by Matthew Barney, the man Michael Kimmelman has identified as "the most important artist of his generation." Kimmelman went on to effuse, "Hands down, he is, at just shy of thirty-six, the most compelling, richly imaginative artist to emerge in years."

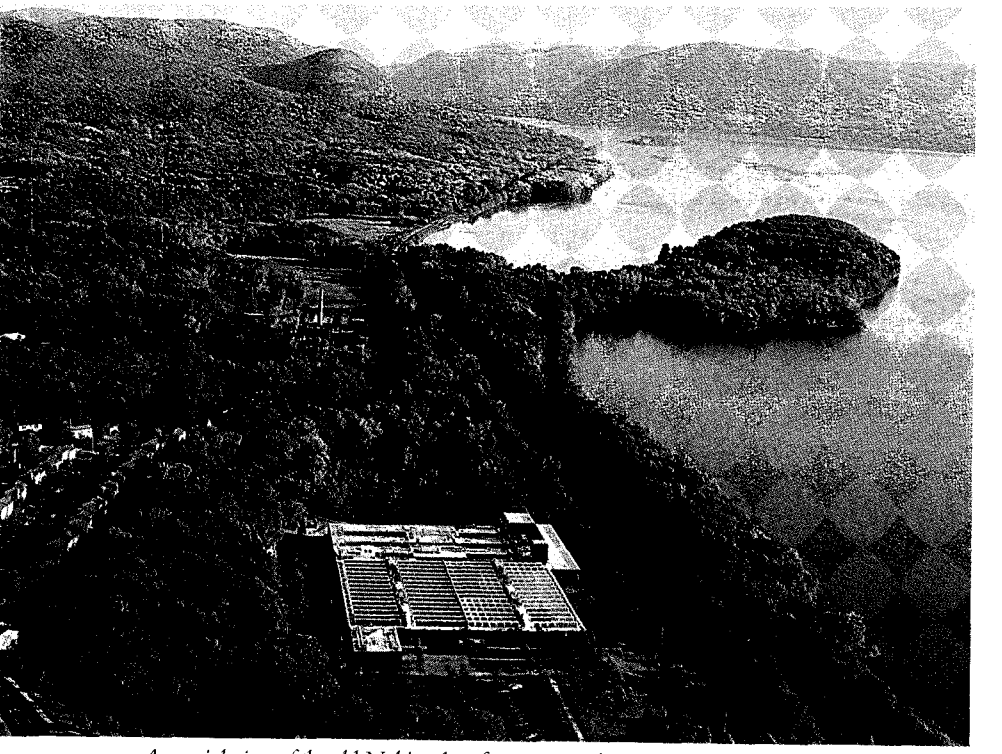
Barney—having now actually turned thirty-six—seems, to my eye, a tad old hat. He belongs to that school of art known as Exhibitionism, and he observes its conventions with stern punctilio, appearing in his films in kilts and clown costumes with bizarre hats and hairdos. Some Exhibitionists, like Dali and Cindy Sherman, do this part of the job themselves; others, like Warhol, delegate the duty to an entourage of starstruck gofers. Barney himself shares the spotlight with a cast of dozens, including such has-been Exhibitionists as Norman Mailer and Richard Serra. For one of his "Cremaster Cycle" films he recruited an entire bevy of chorus girls with whom he tap-dances—with wearying, monotonous incompetence.

As a reviver of camp styles, Barney is no Charles Ludlam, the resident genius of the Theater of the Ridiculous, but rather another Richard Foreman, the world's oldest bohemian bore. Barney pads out his film time by recycling his little repertory of sneers and parodies with a doggedness and paucity of imagination that take his art beyond Exhibitionism into the realm of Sadism. After a few hours of the Cremaster Cycle my response to anything resembling Matthew Barney's presence is like the Teletubbies' when facing any unpleasant novelty: "Run away! Run away!"

The problem with Barney is not so much his mix of *amour-propre* with passé parlor tricks (we're all young once, after all), but the slow pace and incompetent execution. He hasn't learned to edit film, or shoot it. He can't compose images, or harmonize colors. His films' *boings!* are low impact. For the same basic Exhibitionist thrill there is more fun and food for thought in *Jackass: the Movie*. The young man in *Jackass* who sets down his boombox on a Tokyo street, strips to his jockstrap, and starts discoing in front of hordes of incurious pedestrians is making a social and philosophical statement that Barney, even with the *Times*'s Kimmelman at his side, can't come close to.

That the Guggenheim Museum should have helped to fund and to promote the work of Matthew Barney is to be regretted but not wondered at. The Guggenheim is at the cutting edge of dumbing down contemporary art and creating a global franchise of museums where works like Barney's can be showcased. But we should bear in mind that these are parlous times for museums, galleries, and artists at the cutting edge. Theirs is a product increasingly hard to market. So often it is simply intangible. The purchaser may not even get a white rectangle to hang over his sofa, just the title deed to an acre of slagheap. Meanwhile, the young artists themselves are too impatient to be recognized as the new Keith Haring to be bothered to learn to paint in oils. A Magic Marker will serve as well. Indeed, the true idealists among the young feel that the manufacture of "commodities" is beneath their dignity, and in a spirit of raw humility offer their bare, naked need as worthy of federal funding.

For such aspirants, the performance artist Marina Abramovic offers both precept and example, teaching her students at Braunschweig College of Fine Arts in Germany to follow her aesthetic example in a course called "Cleaning the House." This entails five-hour walks in the nude on the rainiest of days, drinking herbal tea, pulling at the scalp to "release electric-



Courtesy Dia:Beacon.

An aerial view of the old Nabisco box factory, now the Dia:Beacon museum.

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Courtesy Sean Kelly Gallery

Marina Abramovic's performance-art students hugging a tree.

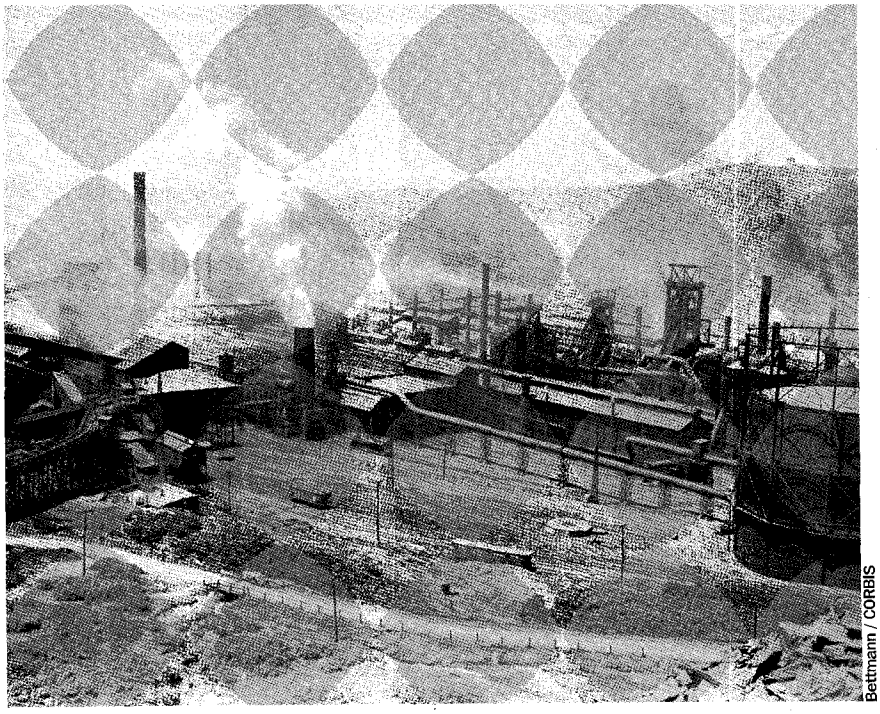
ity," hugging a tree (in the nude) while complaining about their lives, and finding their way home blindfolded.

With such schooling, her students can look forward to a fame equal to that of Abramovic, who can be seen on the cover of the April issue of *Art in America*, wearing a blue prison uniform and standing forlorn and mute in the cage she built for herself in the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York, a cage to be entered only by climbing up step ladders whose rungs are butcher's knives. There she will eat, sleep, bathe, and drink her herbal teas for days on end, while gallery viewers may gawk and think what an exemplary artist she is, how victim-like, how like themselves—in need, not just of funding to build such cages for their own, but for their very tuition and fees at Braunschweig College or at similar institutions all over America.

In that regard, one might note that last month's issue of *ARTnews* (which also features a story on Abramovic as teacher and sibyl) has an article about the current art-school scene. My favorite candor came from Professor Gregory Amenoff in Columbia's M.F.A. program, where students are selected not just for their technical abilities but also for their fit in an "intimate" class of twenty-four. "We put a lot of value on the contact among the students," Amenoff explains—which *ARTnews* glosses thus: "In an art market where who you know can help win introductions to dealers, collectors, and museums, these friendships can prove critical to a career."

In an art market like that, who needs to know how to handle a paintbrush? Painting, like flipping burgers or shearing sheep, is physical labor. It is enough nowadays to declare yourself an artist and then to declare some large artifact in the vast world of found objects to be *your* work of art.

Indeed, if this is the way it works nowadays, then I'm going to make my own large conceptual Earth art—and I have decided to start with the recently decommissioned Bethlehem Steel plant. I recently saw a picture of the foundry in the *New York Times* and it is awesome. I've no idea how the whole thing is supposed to work, but it *looks* like the biggest Richard Serra sculpture ever produced. And since Bethlehem Steel has now gone into bankruptcy, the thing is just standing there, waiting to be recognized as the great work of art that it is. Thus I declare it mine, in the same spirit of appropriation that made a tomato soup can Andy Warhol's and a urinal the work of Marcel Duchamp: *Bethlehem Steel* by Thomas M. Disch. All it needs is Michael Kimmelman's seal of approval. ♦



Bettmann / CORBIS

Bethlehem Steel Plant, *an installation by Thomas M. Disch (2003).*

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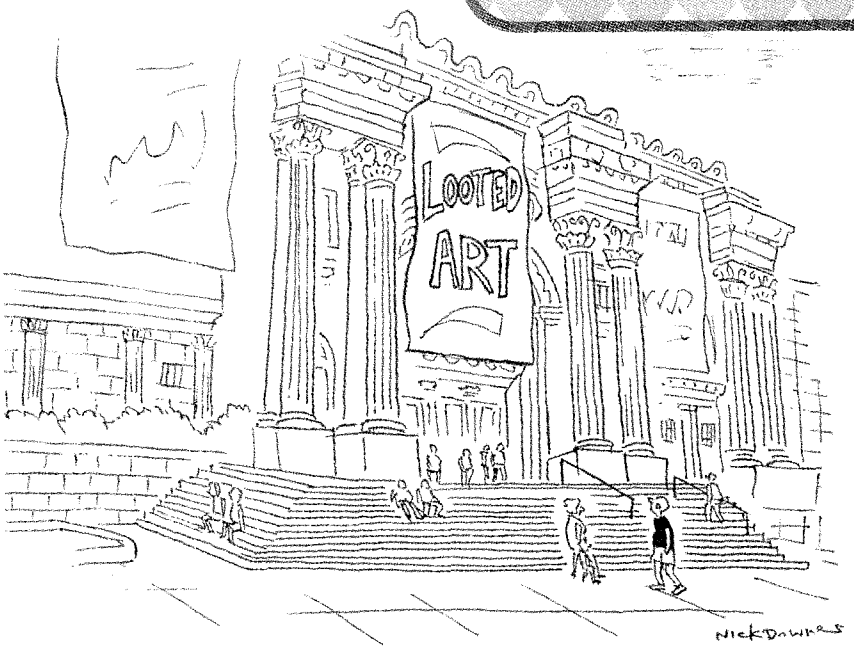

Books in Brief

***The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* by Diane Ravitch (Knopf, 243 pp., $24).** Education historian Diane Ravitch laments the fact that the Department of Education, state boards, textbook publishers, and standardized testing companies do not defend free inquiry and broad exposure to books. In an effort to preempt criticism from moral purists on the right and the politically correct on the left, the education establishment has adopted self-censorship: Anything remotely controversial or offensive is quietly omitted from tests and books, never to challenge the impressionable minds of American schoolchildren.

As a result of such conscientious pruning, students encounter an uncomplicated, sterilized version of history—free of imperial conquests, religious wars, and other disturbing realities. In English class, students can rest assured they will rarely be traumatized by bias in literature or textbook images of women preparing meals.

Ravitch's work is an attempt to secure for children a sound education by educating the interested adult population. Her recommended history textbooks and appendix of classic works for students serve as excellent guidelines for those concerned with intellectually honest accounts of history as well as literature that is sometimes religious, uplifting, atrocious, curious, or sinister.

—Sara Henary

***In, But Not Of: A Guide to Christian Ambition* by Hugh Hewitt (Thomas Nelson, 208 pp., $17.99).** In this how-to guide, Hugh Hewitt offers a succinct strategy for young Christians in their journey to become influential. His ideas include assembling the right credentials: Go to Yale, not Bob Jones; move to New York, not Fargo; become knowledgeable about history and current events; form relations with powerful people. Status matters. *In, But Not Of* also delivers a simple, stark message: Christians are called to defend the Church, and that means playing politics. As Hewitt puts it, "mere Christians" need to "get up from the ground, shake off the dust, and get back into the game." The attacks on America on September 11—and the failure of many to confront the anti-West, anti-Christian hatred unveiled in those attacks—make clear that Christians need to be worrying about more than what color roses should adorn the chapel.

So how might young Christians be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in today's world? Know where you came from, where you want to go, and who can help you get there. Work hard, master your talents, order your finances, keep your work in perspective, choose a church, ask questions, refuse to be easily offended, and practice encouragement. Most important, cultivate the virtue of humility.

—Melissa Seckora

***The Afterword* by Mike Bryan (Pantheon, 195 pp., $16).** Mike Bryan's new book is an afterword to his novel *The Deity Next Door*, which broke "three records on the *New York Times* fiction list." You shouldn't try to remember this book. *The Deity Next Door* exists only in the mind of the author, as a metafictional springboard. In talking about his masterpiece, Bryan is really meditating on the nature of belief in our present dispensation. The plot of his phantom novel revolves around the emergence of a modern deity named Blaine, who performs miracles, like Christ, but who also senses this messiah thing might not be his bag.

Bryan gives us glimpses into his supposed masterpiece—including cut and altered scenes—as he gets at the real reason for writing. Turns out *The Afterword* actually *is* a follow-up to a previous work, *Chapter and Verse: A Skeptic Revisits Christianity*, which was published in the early 1990s. In *Chapter and Verse*, he recounted his time spent at the fundamentalist Criswell College. Bryan came away still a skeptic with a respect for Christianity. But the worm has burrowed deeper in the decade separating the two books. The author's agony is much more interesting than his character's.

—Jeremy Lott

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Parody

From Phil Donahue to the *New York Times*'s Chris Hedges, this year's controversial commencement speakers have been greeted with jeers, catcalls, and stony silence. ***—News item***

the weekly Standard
June 2, 2003

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The [illegible]

Alvin Rabushka is the David and Joan Traitel Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

President [illegible] is currently pushing for a second round of tax cuts as part of his domestic agenda. He has proposed $726 billion in new tax cuts over the next ten years. The House Ways and Means Committee has proposed a smaller ($550 billion) reduction. The more fractious Senate Finance Committee wants to limit the cut to $350 billion. Changes currently being considered include (1) reductions in the tax rate on dividends (some, half, or all); (2) further reduction in the capital gains tax rate (down to 15 percent from 20 percent); (3) accelerating the marginal tax-rate reductions approved in last year's tax bill; (4) tripling or quadrupling first-year write-offs of small business investment from the current level of $25,000; (5) increasing the child tax credit; and (6) granting more relief for married taxpayers.

Each item, on its own, can be justified, but the entire package cannot. The federal income tax code is currently 54,000 pages long—last year's tax bill by itself added up to 2,500 pages. The total number of pages in the federal code has doubled since 1984. **Despite repeated promises to simplify the tax code, a succession of presidents and Congresses contrives each year to make the system worse.** The only real beneficiaries of these annual revisions are commercial tax preparation services, tax accountants, tax lawyers, tax planners, and lobbyists.

It's time we get back to basics, to a flat tax that can be filed on the back of a postcard. A number of countries have adopted a flat tax: Estonia (1994), Latvia (1995), Russia (2001), and Ukraine (2003, at 13 percent, the same as Russia). As of this writing, the Ministry of Finance in Slovakia has proposed a 20 percent flat tax. If adopted this summer, five former Soviet or East-bloc countries will have implemented a flat tax.

More exciting is the prospect of a flat tax being adopted in the People's Republic of China. A Chinese edition of *The Flat Tax* (2d edition, Hoover Press, 1995), which I co-wrote with Robert E. Hall, has just been published by the China Financial & Economic Publishing Company. Furthermore, I have been invited by the Ministry of Finance to participate in an international seminar in Beijing on reforming the personal income tax in China, with special consideration of the flat tax.

Adding China to the above list would mean that more than a quarter of the world's population would conduct their economic and financial affairs under a flat tax. If so, the producers in our largest future competitor, China, would have a big advantage over American producers, who, barring any real tax reform, will remain saddled with higher tax rates and greater complexity.

What do former Soviet states and China know that our president and Congress do not?

— Alvin Rabushka

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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AS THE

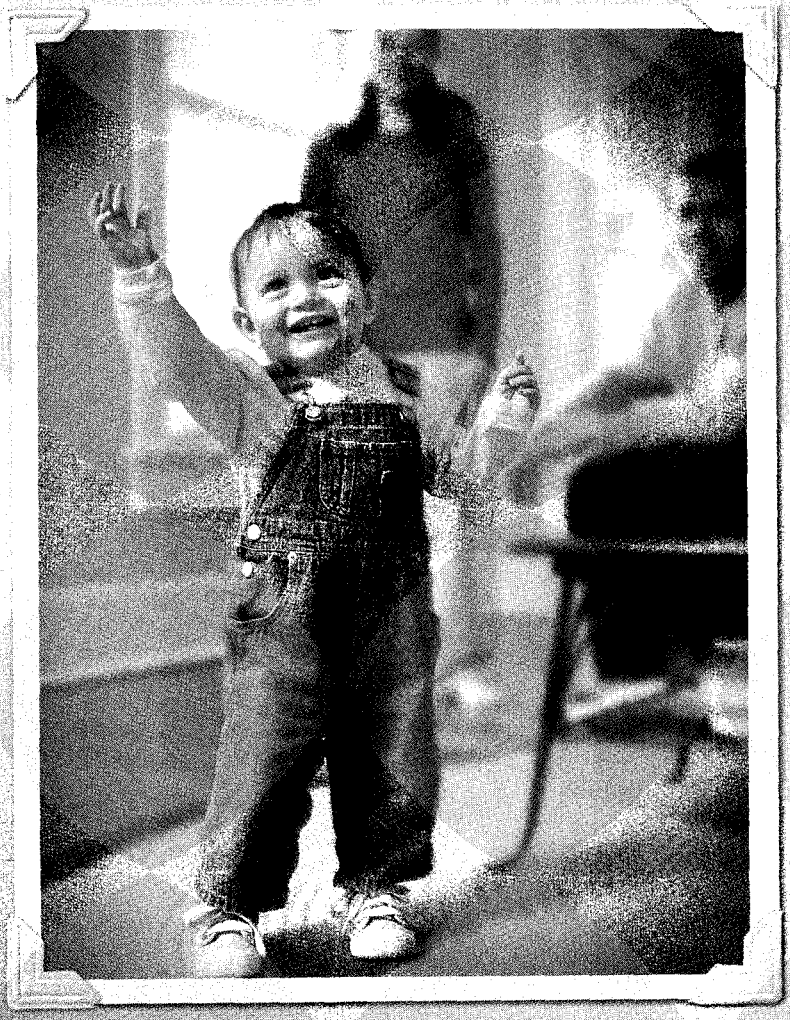
AMERICAN DREAM

GROWS, WE WANT

TO

MAKE SURE IT'S STILL

WITHIN REACH.



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